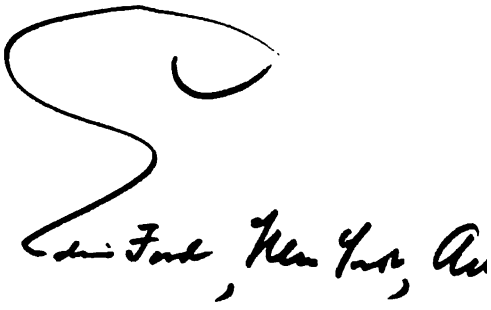
THE BLUE PETER

MORLEY ROBERTS

SHORT STORY COLLECTION

WINWARD PRESCOTT



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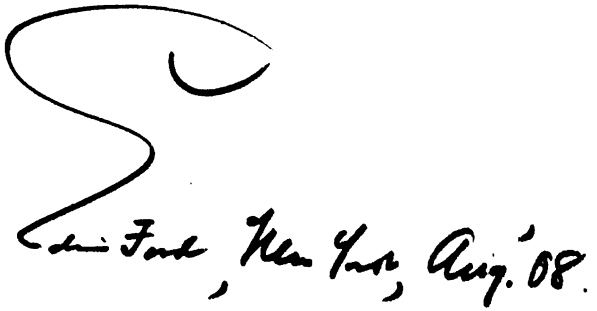

THE BLUE PETER

"BEFORE THEY COULD GASP HE WAS RIGHT IN AMONG THEM."
(*See page 109.*)

THE BLUE PETER

SEA YARNS

BY

MORLEY ROBERTS

Author of "The Promotion of the Admiral," "The Idlers," "Rachel Marr," etc.

With a frontispiece by

HENRY ROTH

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INSCRIBED AFFECTIONATELY

TO

My Father

An excellent mixture of W. W. Jacobs and Morgan Robertson.

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MS. NOTE BY
MR. PRES[illegible]

THE BLUE PETER

I

EXTRA HANDS OF THE *NEMESIS*

THE steamship *Nemesis*, of two thousand five hundred and fifty tons register, and belonging to the port of London, had nearly finished her loading one foggy afternoon in a foggy November. She was at Tilbury, taking in a general cargo for Capetown and Australian ports, and, as the last few cases were coming on board, the skipper came on board too by way of the big gangway, close by which the second mate was standing.

"Is that the last of it?" asked the 'old man' gloomily.

"Yes, sir," said Mr. Cade with equal gloominess. When a man is second mate at the age of fifty it is not surprising that he should be sulky.

"And it is time it was, for we're well down to our mark, and no mistake about it, sir."

Captain Jordan said nothing, but walked for'ard to his cabin and sat down wearily. He threw a bundle of papers on his table, and filling his pipe smoked for a few minutes. He was a fine handsome white-headed man of some fifty-two years, and had once been ambitious. Now he worked for Messrs. Gruddle, Shody, & Co., and, as all seamen knew, to work for them was to have lost all chances that following the sea affords even in these days.

"The swine," said old Jordan to himself, "oh, the swine that they are! I wish I could get even with them. If I could do that I could die happy. They are charitable, are they? Curse their charity! Ah! if I hadn't been so unlucky in my last employment."

But that was it. He had been in the employ of a good firm with one bitterly unjust regulation. Any skipper of theirs who lost a ship, even through no fault of his own, had to go, and, though he had worked for them for twenty years, that was his fate when he piled up the *Grimshaw Hall* on the Manacles.

"And that's how they got me cheap," said Jordan. "And because poor Cade lost his master's certificate through an error of judgment

they have him cheap, and they have my old chum Thripp cheap in the same way. Oh, they are a precious lot of swine, and I wish I had 'em here with me when we are out at sea. I'd tell 'em what I think of 'em, if I got the sack right off and had to ship before the mast."

Thripp the mate came by the cabin, and the skipper called to him.

"Yes, sir," said Thripp.

"Come in a moment," said Jordan. "I've something to tell you, something that will cheer you up and make you like the firm better than ever."

Thripp was also as grey as a badger, but not through age. He, too, had been a master mariner, and had lost his first and only command by running her against an iceberg in a fog. He had had orders to make a quick passage at all costs, but those orders were verbal, and his owners showed in court printed instructions that bade all their employees use extra caution in time of fog, even if a slow passage were the result. Therefore Messrs. Gruddle, Shody, & Co. got him cheap too.

"What's their charity now?" asked Thripp scornfully.

"It begins at home as usual," replied the skipper. "They have cut you and me down thirty bob a month and Cade a quid."

Thripp sighed, and then swore.

"Well, we have both had our certificates suspended," said Jordan bitterly, "so what can we expect? Men like us are every owner's dogs, and they know it. I'm half a mind to quit."

"I've got a wife," said Thripp, "and I can't put the poor old girl in the workhouse."

Jordan had never been married, and was glad of it now.

"I once had a chance to marry a lady with ships of her own," he said thoughtfully, "and I was fool enough to prefer to run alone. But it is wonderful how fond that woman was of me, Thripp. She proposed to me three times."

"You don't say so," said Thripp.

"Fact, I assure you," replied Jordan. "She was as ugly as a freak, and fat enough to make a livin' in a show, so I couldn't do it, you see."

"I see," sighed Thripp, "but it was a pity."

"An awful pity," said the skipper. "And even now she ain't forgot me, though it is ten years ago and more since we first met. Every

Christmas she sends me a puddin' and a bottle of rum that would make your hair curl, ninety over proof at least, and with the aroma of a West Injies sugar plantation. I wonder if she has any sort of a notion how I've come down in life so as to be at the mercy of a Jew like Gruddle."

Cade came along and reported that the very last of the cargo was in and that the hatches were on. Jordan called him in and gave him a tot of whisky, and broke the news to him that his wages had had another cut. But the second mate said nothing at all. He shook his head and went out.

"His spirit is broke," said Jordan gloomily.

"Oh, no," said Thripp, "it's only that he hasn't the words, poor chap. Well, it ain't any wonder. I haven't any myself. But if I ran across Gruddle my opinion is that I should find 'em in spite of my bein' a married man."

"Last week they was talkin' of comin' along with us as far as Gib," said Jordan. "They are mighty proud of this steamer that I know they got by fraud and diddlin' out of Johns and Mackie. Oh, they are very proud of her, and they see money in her."

"If they had come," said Thripp savagely, "I should have said something or bust."

"Better to bust, I suppose," replied the skipper, "though I own that if I knew they was comin' with us I should be tempted to say a lot that's now boilin' inside me. I wish they was, I own it. I own it freely, even if I got the sack."

He relapsed on the ship's papers, and Thripp went out to attend to the duties of a conscientious mate on the eve of going to sea. He passed a telegraph boy on the main-deck and directed the lad to the captain's cabin. Destiny in a uniform thanked him and whistled. When he had found the skipper and old Jordan had read the message he was the one who whistled. But he did not do so from want of thought by any means. He looked as savage as a trapped weasel, and as black as a nigger on a dark night.

"Well, I'm damned," said Jordan, "so they are goin' to do it after all! And I don't know that I wish it now!"

He whistled again and rang the bell for the steward, who was another of the firm's cheap bargains. He had been in prison, in company with a former captain of his, for disposing of stores in foreign parts and feeding the crew on

something that the illicit purchaser threw into the bargain. He was now trying to regain his lost reputation at the wages of an ordinary seaman.

"Steward," said the skipper, "I want you to read this telegram and arrange for it as best you can. They will be with us for six days or thereabouts."

For the wire was from Mr. Gruddle, and it stated that the four partners were going with them as far as Gibraltar.

"Shall we 'ave to get in anythin' special for them in the way of provisions, sir?" asked the steward.

The 'old man' scratched his head and said that he thought so.

"As you know, Smith, what we have to eat is horrid bad," he said thoughtfully.

"It is, sir," replied Smith. "It ain't fit for pigs."

Jordan stood thinking for a minute. Then he turned to Smith.

"On the whole, Smith, I think I'd get nothing. I'd like 'em to see the kind of stuff they buy for us. Perhaps it will do them good. It don't do us any. Get nothin', Smith."

"Very well, sir," said the steward with a grin. He turned to go, and Jordan stopped him.

"I suppose, Smith, that some of the grub is worse than the rest?" he asked.

"Lord bless you, sir, the men's grub is fair poison."

"Is it now?" said the skipper. "Do you know, Smith, I think we'll eat what the men do for the passage as far as Gibraltar. I'll speak to Mr. Thripp and Mr. Cade, and I daresay they won't mind just for a little while."

"I could put you and them somethin' better in your cabin, sir, if the other made you *very* sick," suggested Smith.

"So you could. To be sure you could," said Jordan. "That's a very good idea of yours, Smith. But fix up their berths. They will be aboard to-morrow mornin'."

He broke the news to the mates that the whole firm was coming on a little trip with them, and when he asked them if they had any objection to the fare that Smith proposed to give them for those few days they said they would be glad to see it on the table. They thought almost happily of the face that Gruddle

would put on when he saw the measly and forbidden pork. They had visions of Shody, who was a wholesale grocer as well as a shipowner, when he sampled the stores that he supplied the firm with. They smiled to think of Sloggett and Butterworth, the junior partners, who promised to be quite as bad as their elders by and by, and were known to be fond of high feeding. The only mistake they fell into about the whole body of the firm was that they took them for fools who did not know what sort of food they gave their officers and crews. For next morning at nine o'clock a number of fascinating-looking cases were brought on board, on which was the name of a well-known provision merchant. And with the cases, which obviously contained provisions, there were some which quite as obviously held champagne. The 'old man' and the two mates looked at this consignment and their jaws dropped.

"Our scheme ain't worth a cent," said Jordan sadly.

"It might be worse, though," said Thripp; "we'll get some of this lot, of course."

"Do you think so?" asked Jordan sadly.

"Of course I do," said Thripp indignantly.

"Whatever kind of swabs they are, they ain't surely so measly as to grub on this in our very presence and see us eat the other muck?"

The skipper smiled a slow and bitter smile.

"Thripp, you are a good seaman, but as a judge of humanity you ain't in it with Cade. All you and me will get of this lot will be the smell of it."

An hour later the owners came on board, and were received with the humility due to such great men, who owned ships and shops and had houses in Croyden, and reputations which smelt in heaven like a tallow refining factory. The very deck hands who brought their luggage on board cursed them under their breath, and would have been glad to do it openly. Then, as the tide served, the *Nemesis* cast off from the wharf and made her way out into the stream, and started on her most memorable trip. If all the folks connected with the sea who knew the character of the men who owned her had also known that they were on board, and what was going to happen before they got back to England again, she and they would have got a more lively send-off than she did get.

The partners were in a very happy frame

of mind, and showed it. They had got hold of the *Nemesis* cheap and were going to make money out of her. They had their officers and crew on the cheap as well, and it warmed their hearts to think of the price that they had provisioned her at in these hard times. Everything on board the *Nemesis* was cheap except the grub they had sent on board for their own use, and even that had been paid for by a creditor as a means of getting the firm to renew a bill. It was quite certain the firm knew their way about the dark alleys of this world. Gruddle had a cent.-per-cent. grin on his oily face, and fat Shody smiled like a hyena out on a holiday, and the two more gentlemanly-looking members of the firm laughed jovially.

" It's a great idea this," said Sloggett. " We're going to 'ave an ideal 'oliday and pay nothin' for it, and when we get to Gibraltar we will put the screw on Garcia & Co. and show them that we are not to be played with. Oh, this was a good idea of yours, Butterworth, and I congratulate you on it."

They were shown their berths by the scared and obsequious steward, and they changed their frock-coats and high hats, without which

they could not move a step, and put on more suitable garments. Gruddle, for instance, put on patent leather shoes and spats, which with black trousers and a loud check coat looked exceedingly striking. He wore a Royal Yacht Squadron cap, which he had as much right to as a Field Marshal's uniform. It suited his style of Oriental beauty as much as that would have done, and he went on deck as pleased as Punch. He felt every inch a sailor. The others followed him, and were almost as remarkable to look at in their own way. Shody, who was a very fat man, was in knickerbockers and shooting-boots, and wore a fur-lined overcoat; while Sloggett was adorned in a new yachtsman's rig-out which made him look like a pallid shop-walker. Butterworth was the only one who stuck to ordinary clothes, and, as a consequence, he looked like a gentleman beside the others. It was an illusion, of course, for he wasn't a gentleman by any means. On the contrary, he was a member of the firm, and a rising man in that branch of the shipping world which makes its money out of sinking ships.

"'Ow long will it be before we are in fine weather?" he asked, as he stared at the docks

and warehouses. But no one knew, and just then there was no one to ask, for all the officers had their hands full. The river was thick with traffic, and there was enough mist on the water to make navigation a little risky.

"Oh, give me sunlight," said Gruddle. "When the sun shines I'm almost as happy as when I turn a loss into a profit by attention to details."

His partners laughed.

"There is nothing like an 'oliday on the cheap, with a free mind," said Shody. "I likes an 'oliday, I own, but when it costs me money I ain't as 'appy as when it costs someone else money."

"There is one thing about this vessel that fills me with a just pride," said Gruddle, "and that is that her wages bill per month is prob'ly thirty-three and a third per cent. under that of any vessel of hequal tonnage sailin' out of London this day. And it's done without meanness too, all on account of my notion of givin' work to the unfortunate at a trifle under current rates. This is the only firm in London that can be charitable, and 'ave the name for it, and make money out of it."

They said that was so, and they discussed the officers.

"All good men, if a trifle unfortunate," said Shody. "A year ago who would 'ave believed that we could 'ave got a man like Jordan for what we pay 'im? The very hidea would 'ave been laughed at. But he 'as an accident that wasn't 'is fault, and down comes 'is price, and we nip in and get a real good man cheap as dirt, and keep 'im off of the streets so to speak. Oh, Gruddle, it was a great idea of yours; and to give that poor unfort'nit steward a job when 'e came out of chokey was real noble of you."

"So it was," said Gruddle, "but I was always soft-'earted if I didn't lose money by it."

"So you were," said Shody warmly. "Do you remember 'ow you gave poor Jenkins time to borrow money of his relatives w'en by all rights you ought to 'ave given 'im into charge, and 'e would 'ave got ten years as safe as a bill of Rothschild's?"

In such reminiscences of the firm's noble efforts on the part of suffering and erring humanity they passed an agreeable hour, and then went below and cracked a bottle of champagne. Soon afterwards it was time for lunch, and But-

terworth saw to the arrangements of their special table, and got things out to be cooked. The skipper came down for a moment while they were eating, and Gruddle called him over to their table.

"Will you 'ave a glass of champagne, captain?" he asked.

"With pleasure, sir," said the white-headed old skipper, who looked like a thoroughbred beside any one of them.

"Ah, I thought you would," said Gruddle warmly. "I reckon you 'ave not tasted it since you wrecked the *Grimshaw 'All* on the Manacles, captain. And don't you forget that if you wrecks the *Nemesis* you won't taste much but skilly and water for the rest of your life. Pour 'im out a glass, Sloggett, if you can spare it."

Jordan drank the wine, and it nearly choked him. When he got out of their sight he spat on the deck, and went upon the bridge alongside the pilot shivering. His hands were clenched and he was almost sick with rage.

The mud-pilot saw that there was something wrong.

"Are you ill, captain?" he asked.

"I've 'ad a blow," said the old skipper, "I've 'ad a blow."

The pilot thought he had had bad news, and was sorry for him.

"No, not bad news," said poor old Jordan. "It ain't no news to me. Somebody said somethin' that puts things in a new light to me."

He chewed the cud of unutterable bitterness and wished he was dead. He did not go below again till they were well in the Channel, and he ate no supper. He could not get it down. He sent for Thripp to his cabin, and burst out on the mate with the intolerable insults that he had had to put up with.

"We're their dogs," said Thripp bitterly; "but if I am married I'll not put up with much, sir. They're half drunk by now, and are playin' cards and drinkin' more, and Dixon is cryin' in his pantry because one of 'em started bullyin' him about something, and said that he was a hard bargain at any price."

"I wish I could get even, oh, I do wish it," said old Jordan. "Did you ever hear of such mean dogs in all your life?"

"Only in books, sir," said the mate thoughtfully. "I recollect in some book readin' about a man like Gruddle, but I forget what book it was. But I do remember that someone knocked

the man down that was as bad as Gruddle. I enjoyed that book amazin'ly, sir."

"I wish you knew the name of it," said the skipper. "But if I 'ad as much money laid by as would bring me in fifteen shillin's a week I'd show you something better than anythin' you ever read in a book, Thripp. You mark my words, I would."

"What would you show me, sir?" asked the mate eagerly.

But old Jordan sighed.

"What's the good of thinking of pure enjoyment when one ain't in the least likely to get the chance of havin' it? We must put up with 'em, Thripp. After all it's only to Gibraltar, and after that we are by ourselves. I hope I shan't explode before then."

And Thripp went away to talk to the engineer, and to try to remember the name of the book in which someone got his deserts. While he was doing that the partners played cards and drank more than was good for them, and thoroughly enjoyed themselves. They told Thripp, when he came below, that the whole ship was disgracefully dirty, and that if he wanted to keep his job he had better see to it at once.

As they screwed him down on paint and all stores necessary to prevent a vessel looking as bad as a house in Chancery, this naturally did not cheer him up. Dixon was really in tears because Gruddle swore at him in the most horrid way without any reason, except that he had sworn at Shody and had got the worst of it. Cade accidentally ran into Butterworth, who was sneaking round to see if he could find anything to complain about, and Butterworth promptly said he was a clumsy hound. According to Jordan, Cade's spirit was broken, but this was more than he could stand even from one of the owners. He told Butterworth to go where it was a deal hotter than the Red Sea in July. He did not use any circumlocution about it either, and Butterworth was in a fury. He complained to the skipper, and Jordan had the greatest difficulty in refraining from endorsing Cade's hasty recommendation of a suitable climate for the junior partner. But he did refrain.

"I am very sorry that he should have so far forgotten himself," said Jordan. "I will speak to him at once."

"The insolent fool must apologise," said

Butterworth; and Jordan said that Mr. Cade would undoubtedly see that that was his duty. He called for Cade, and Cade's spirit seemed to have quite bucked up. He flatly declined to apologise unless Mr. Butterworth first did so for 'calling him out of his name.'

"He said I was a clumsy hound," said Cade.

"So you are," said Butterworth, "and I say it again."

"Do you hear that, Captain Jordan?" asked Cade. "Is an officer in this vessel or in any other to be spoke to like that before the men? Before I'll apologise I'll see that sailor-robber in hell, sir."

The poor skipper danced in his anxiety to preserve the peace.

"Mr. Cade, you mustn't. I order you to hold your tongue, sir. Go to your cabin, sir, and after some reflection I am sure you will offer an apology to Mr. Butterworth."

"I'll see him damned first," said Cade as he marched off.

"I sack you! I discharge you!" roared Butterworth, who was in a blind fury.

"Discharge your grandmother," said Cade discourteously. "You can't do it. I'm on the ship's papers. And who are you, anyhow?"

The owners held a consultation in the cabin when Butterworth came below with his story of the second mate's insolence and insubordination.

"Let us be clear as to 'ow it occurred," said Gruddle. "Now, Butterworth, tell us what it was."

"He ran against me, and I remonstrated, and he told me to go to hell," said the fuming Butterworth.

"That ith very bad, very 'ighly improper," said Gruddle. "But 'ow did you remonstrate? Did you 'it 'im?"

"Certainly not," said the junior partner warmly, "all I said was that he was clumsy."

Shody and Sloggett said that Cade must be sacked at once, or at least as soon as they got to Gibraltar. Gruddle, who knew a deal more than they did about most things in the way of the law and business, shook his head.

"It will sound very queer to you," said Gruddle, "but the truth of the matter ith that I don't think we can thack 'im. The man 'ath a contract for the voyage, and the only one that can thack 'im ith the captain."

The rest said this was absurd. Were they not the owners, and could they not do as they

pleased with every man-jack on board? And even if Gruddle was right, they could tell the captain to dump Cade over the side at Gibraltar.

"Well, of course we can do that," said Gruddle.

"And we will," said the outraged Butterworth. "I think we had better 'ave Jordan in now and tell 'im what to do."

They sent for the skipper, and the poor old chap came down and stood up before them. With his big white beard and his ruddy handsome face he looked like a captive Viking before a tribunal of tradesmen.

"This 'ere conduct of the second mate is what we've called you down about," said Gruddle. "'E was very rude to Mr. Butterworth; told 'im, in fact, to go to 'ell, w'ich can't be put up with."

"And ain't goin' to be," said the offended partner. "We 'ave sacked 'im, and 'e must be sent ashore at Gibraltar and another one found."

Jordan had the very strongest inclination to tell Butterworth exactly what Cade had told him. But he restrained himself, and suggested to them that it would probably take some time to pick up a new second mate at Gib, besides

which they had arranged not to enter but to signal for a boat for them to go ashore in. It was Shody who saw the way out and brought them all to grief.

"Cade can come ashore with us," he said with a fat and happy smile, "and you needn't wait to get another man in 'is place, captain. I always understood that the second mate was on'y a kind of deputy for the skipper, and I see no reason w'y 'e couldn't be done without altogether."

"That's a very good idea of yours, Shody," said Sloggett and Butterworth in the same breath, "and I daresay the captain will see that it is."

But Jordan was breathless with indignation. Shody spoke for him.

"I always did think," said Shody, "that the captain of any vessel 'ad much too easy a time of it. I don't see no reason why 'e shouldn't stand his watch same as the mate. The captain's job is an easy one and a well paid one. I should say it was an overpaid one. 'Avin' a second mate is like 'avin' a fifth wheel to a coach, and the job should be abolished. This is a good chance of inauguratin' an entirely new system, and a reform that will save money."

The only one of them who thought this was going too far was Gruddle, and he did not care to look Jordan in the face. When he did look at the captain it was because he had to, and because Jordan demanded it. The old man's face was livid with rage, and he struck the table a resounding blow that made the glasses dance. The partners shrank back from him as if he was a wild elephant, and Gruddle went as white as the skipper's beard.

"You infernal hogs," said the skipper, "you infernal hogs, I'm sorry I ever saw one of you! You are a disgrace to the name of Englishmen, and — and I despise you!"

He looked as if he did; there was no mistake about that, and he also looked as if he was about to assault the whole gang of them. The two junior partners jumped to their feet, not so much to be prepared to defend themselves as to run away. Jordan might be somewhat past his best, but he was still as strong as a bull and as big as any two of them in spite of Shody's fat. He was distinctly dangerous.

"'Ow, 'ow dare you on our ship?" asked Shody with a poor attempt at dignity. "Partners, our kindness 'as been throwed away, bestowed on an hunworthy hobject."

"Shut up, or I'll make you," roared the old skipper. "I won't be spoke to by a lot of hogs such as you, with your talk of charity and your beastly manners. You can sack me if you like, but you don't sack the second mate while I am captain of this vessel, so I tell you."

"We — we discharge you," said Butterworth furiously. "We discharge him, don't we?"

They said that they did, and for a second the skipper was about to take his dismissal lying down. But the next moment he refused to do anything of the sort. He saw the strength of his position where they naturally only saw his weakness. He laughed a little angrily, but still he laughed, and the sound outraged the firm.

"You will laugh on the wrong side of your face when you are on the street," said Shody. And just then Jordan heard Cade enter his cabin. He laughed again, this time much more naturally, and called to the second mate. He came in looking as black as a thundercloud.

"Mr. Cade," said the skipper in almost his usual mild tone of voice.

"Yes, sir," replied Cade.

"Would you be so good, Mr. Cade, as to tell me who I am?"

Cade stared, and so did the partners.

"Who you are, sir?" stammered the second greaser in great amazement.

"Yes, who I am?" repeated the skipper.

"Why, you are Captain Jordan, sir," said Cade, still out of soundings.

"Of what ship, Mr. Cade?"

"Of this one, sir," replied Cade, who hoped that the skipper hadn't gone mad.

"Exactly so, Mr. Cade," said the 'old man,' who had by this time made up his mind to a very definite course of action. "You hear that, gentlemen?"

They did hear it, but were not much wiser. They looked at each other in some amazement.

"What do you mean, you old fool?" asked Sloggett. But Jordan did not answer him. He spoke again to Cade.

"And if I am the skipper of this boat," he went on, "who are these gentlemen who are givin' me directions to put you ashore at Gib?"

Cade eyed them malevolently, and for the first time a glimpse of the captain's meaning came to him. His face lightened, and he smiled grimly.

"Why, they are only passengers," he said.

"Right the very first time," said Jordan with a pleasant smile; "that is what they are here, and no mistake about it. And as passengers, Mr. Cade, what authority have they?"

"Not so much as the cook," said Cade.

The skipper, who had quite recovered his temper, turned to the partners.

"You hear that, gentlemen?" he asked.

They did hear it, and it sounded very absurd to all of them but old Gruddle, who did know something of the ways of the sea, and the laws of it.

"You are an old fool," said Butterworth, "and when we get to Gibraltar you will find it out too, quick."

The skipper grinned quite amiably. As he had now made up his mind, he reverted to the superiority of tone which had distinguished him when he was captain of the *Grimshaw Hall*.

"Yes, I shall find it out — when I get to Gibraltar," said Jordan, with ample and deadly courtesy, and saying that he went out of the saloon and called Cade to follow him. When they came out on deck he put his hand on the second mate's shoulder.

"I ain't goin' to Gibraltar at all, Mr. Cade," he said with a nod, and Cade gasped.

"Ain't you, sir?" he asked after a long pause of astonishment.

"Not much, I'm not," said Jordan. "I've put up with a deal, but I'll show 'em now who's the boss here. I got orders for Capetown and Sydney, and if they choose to come on board as passengers and tell me to go elsewhere I don't choose to do it, and that is all there is to it. Damn their eyes!"

"Amen, sir!" said Cade. "To think that Butterworth called me a clumsy hound!"

"He did," said the skipper. "But I'll give you a chance of gettin' even before you are a week older. You see if I don't."

And in the cabin the partners were staring at each other in great surprise.

"This is mutiny," said Sloggett. But Gruddle growled.

"Don't be an ass, Sloggett," said the senior partner. "'Ow can a captain be guilty of mutiny? The very idea is absurd."

So it was, of course.

"I don't believe he will go into Gibraltar at all," said Gruddle with a gasp. "You chaps

'ave put the old chap's back up, and when 'e is mad 'e's capable of anything."

"He wouldn't dare," said Butterworth. "Do you mean he will take us on to Capetown?"

"That's what I do mean," sighed the wretched senior partner, who did not find that he enjoyed the sea at all. "That is exactly wot I do mean."

"Good Lord," said Shody, "and there ain't enough decent grub to do more than take us to Gibraltar."

"This is a very 'orrid situation," said Gruddle, "and we owes it entirely to you, Butterworth, for quarrellin' with the second mate. I believe you done a lot more than call him clumsy. I'll lay odds you was grossly insultin', as you always are."

The others turned on Butterworth and said that they believed it too, and the unhappy Butterworth acknowledged that he had called Cade a hound.

"I'm right as usual," said Gruddle; "and if I know my man no apology will do any good. I can see that they are savage because we cut down their wages. I've a good mind to raise 'em again till we get a chance to cut 'em down

safely. We was fools to come this 'ere trip, and we owe it all to Butterworth who suggested it."

Butterworth got it all round, and was in an extreme state of wretchedness.

"I think that if Butterworth is a gent, as we are all ready to believe," said Shody, "that 'e will go at once and apologise to that beast of a second mate; and we can tell the skipper that we will raise 'is wages again — till we can sack 'im."

This seemed a very good idea to every one but Butterworth.

"I never apologised to anyone, and I ain't goin' to begin with a man like Cade," said Butterworth stubbornly.

"You're not a man of business in the least," said Shody. "I always maintained that we lose more money by your manners, w'ich are those of a pig, than we ever gain by your sharp practice. And now, 'avin' got your partners into a 'orrid mess with a mad and insubordinate captain, you are prepared to see them eat muck on'y fit for sea-goin' folks. The on'y consolation is that you will 'ave to eat it yourself."

"Oh, Butterworth, do apologise," said Gruddle with tears in his eyes, "do apologise,

for if you eat a little dirt in doin' so it is far better than eatin' all you will if we continue this 'orrid and disastrous trip."

The others agreed with Gruddle, and at last Butterworth was induced to put his pride in his pocket and try an apology on Cade.

"It won't work, I know it won't work," said the cause of all their woes. "That Cade 'as a down on me I know, and 'e isn't a gentleman and won't take an apology from one. But all the same I'll try, though I don't see why it should all be put on me. Men like these officers of ours think a deal more of a few shillin's a week than a few cross words, and it was Gruddle who cut down their wages. I think it is Gruddle who should apologise."

But Gruddle argued that he had not called Cade a hound, and when Butterworth went off on his painful errand he turned to the others and said —

"The hidea of Butterworth thinkin' that 'e is a gentleman!"

They all shook their heads at the idea of Butterworth doing so, and told each other stories of his origin in a pawnshop in the Borough Road.

"And 'e 'asn't manners either," sighed Shody.

By this time it was noon, and Cade was on the bridge, while Thripp was in the skipper's cabin hearing a fuller account of the row than Cade had given him. Cade was in no frame of mind to receive an apology from anyone. He took things hard, and chewed over them horribly.

"Hound, clumsy hound, am I?" said Cade as he paced the bridge with his hands in his pockets. "I'd like to 'clumsy hound' him. Clumsy hound, and I didn't knock him down! Bein' married makes a coward of a man!"

He turned about to find the object of his wrath on the sacred bridge. It made him quite forget that he was married, and that Mrs. Cade was hard to deal with if the money was not forthcoming in due season. He stared at Butterworth in the most offensive way, and the apology with which the junior partner was primed stuck in his throat.

"What the devil do you want here?" asked Cade savagely. "Don't you know that this part of the vessel is private? But perhaps you have come to say that you are sorry for callin'

me out of my name just now, when I didn't knock you down as I should have done?"

It seemed peculiarly hard lines to Butterworth that his act of grace was to be discounted in this way, and as he was not by any means as big a coward as Gruddle or Shody he fired up at once.

"I was goin' to apologise, but now I won't, and I defy you to knock me down, and you are a clumsy hound, so there!"

He put up his hands a moment too late, for Cade made a jump like a buck and caught him full on the jaw, and the junior partner went down like a sack of coals. He got up again more quickly than was wise, and once more went down. This time he did not get up, though he was invited to do so with great politeness by the second mate. For when Cade had it all his own way, and had wiped out the sense of self-contempt which had lately been troubling him, he grew quite happy.

"Get up, dear, and let me knock you endways once more," he said in the most agreeable tones at his command. "But I see you won't, my chicken. You have had enough, and you may go now and send up your partners one by one,

and I'll serve the sailor-robbin' scum in the same way. Get out of this, and next time don't forget that at the first crooked word, though it is only rams'-horns, I'll knock you as flat as a jib down-haul. This here bridge is private."

And Butterworth rose and staggered down to his partners with his hand to his jaw.

"I'm much happier than I was, and if the old girl cuts up rough at my gettin' the sack again, why all I have to say is that keelin' Butterworth over is worth double the money," said Cade joyfully.

By this time the skipper had come to a decison which would have pleased Cade even more than knocking the junior partner endways. Thripp said that he did not care if the skipper did it. In fact, he wanted him to do it, and did not care if it cost him his billet and he had to ship before the stick in a wind-jammer for the rest of his life. He also went on to say that it would be a joy to him always, and that it would be an equal joy to all hands.

"Then that's decided on," said the 'old man' firmly. "We ain't goin' into Gibraltar this trip, not by a hatful, and when their special grub gives out we'll decide what is to follow."

"Yes, sir," said the mate, and he turned in to get a snooze before it was his turn to go on watch again. Jordan walked into the saloon, and was passing the partners like a ship in full sail passing some mud-barges, when he was pulled up by Sloggett.

"Captain Jordan, Mr. Butterworth has been knocked down by the second mate."

"Oh, has he?" asked Jordan.

"Yes, I have," roared the unfortunate man who had not got his apology out in time to save himself. "Yes, I 'ave, and when we get to Gibraltar I'll 'ave 'im in jail as sure as I'm one of the owners of this vessel."

Jordan was perfectly reckless, and cared nothing by now for any of them. He laughed, and walked on towards his cabin.

"Ain't you goin' to do nothin' about it?" asked Shody.

"Nothin'," said the skipper. "Serves the measly little swine right. I hope Mr. Cade will serve the lot of you the same way before we get to Capetown."

With that shot, which clean hulled them and made them quiver, he went into his cabin and slammed the door upon them.

"There, there, what did I tell you?" wailed Gruddle. "'E's goin' to take us on to Africa, and we can't stop 'im."

The prospect of being shut up in a ship with officers who totally refused to recognise that they had any status but passengers was very dreadful, but over and above that there was the question of what would become of the business, with none to attend to it but underpaid clerks who were not allowed to know the dark and secret ways of their employers. And then there was the question of the grub. Shody fairly quailed at the prospect. They turned on poor smitten Butterworth like one man, and if Cade needed any more revenge they gave it him.

"You must go and speak to the skipper, Butterworth," they said in chorus, "you must persuade him to act reasonable."

"Yes, and be knocked down again!" said the wretched junior, whose head was aching as the result of Cade's hard fists. "'E's a much more powerful man than that overbearin' beast on the bridge, and I ain't goin' to be whippin' boy for any of you."

"But you got us to come," urged Gruddle.

"I wish to 'eavens I 'ad died before I thought

of it," sighed Butterworth. "But who would 'ave thought as men like them, under our thumb so to speak, would 'ave taken things as they 'ave done. It ain't my fault."

But they said it was, and at last Gruddle with a groan suggested that they should raise the skipper's wages if he would be good and kind to them, and not ruin them by taking them to Africa.

"For don't let us disguise it from ourselves, it will be ruin or very near it. We'll get back and find ourselves in the Court, without any of them bills provided for," said the senior partner. "Butterworth, I don't believe you ever tried to apologise to the second mate at all."

"He knocked me down as soon as I come on the bridge," screamed Butterworth angrily.

"You should 'ave apologised to a man like that from a safe distance," said the wise and sad Gruddle. "You 'ad no business on the bridge, and you know it. 'Owever, I insist that you go and speak polite to the captain, who won't 'it you, I'm sure, while you are so swelled from what the second mate 'as done."

It took quite a quarter of an hour's combined persuasion to make Butterworth put his head

into the lion's den, and he only did it on the understanding that he was to be empowered to offer the skipper a rise of three pounds a month and an indemnity for his insubordination.

"Very well," the others agreed, "you can say we forgives him for his mutinous conduct, and won't take any steps in the matter if 'e lands us at Gib as arranged. And of course our sayin' so means nothin', and we can 'ave 'im sacked at Capetown by cable, and put on the street."

Even then Butterworth was very uneasy, and demurred to going to interview the ferocious Jordan without some kind of an excuse.

"'Adn't we better wait till 'e comes out to dinner?" urged Butterworth, "and then our speakin' will come natural, or more natural than now."

Sloggett looked up at this.

"Oh, if you are such a coward as to want an excuse I can give you one," he said. "I quite forgot till this very moment that I brought a letter from the office for this old scoundrel of a Jordan. So you can take it in, Butterworth."

But the junior partner did not like being called a coward after his encounter with the

second mate, and he was very cross with Sloggett.

"Coward yourself," he said angrily. "Why don't you take it? I'll bet you 'aven't the pluck to call that Cade a clumsy 'ound."

"No more 'ave you, now," said Sloggett; "and if you like I'll take on your job with Jordan, and give 'im the letter myself."

"All right, you can," said Butterworth; "and I'll take five to three in sovs. that you don't get an 'idin'."

That no one offered to lay these odds made Sloggett very uncomfortable, but as he had undertaken the job he went through with it, though he did it with a very pale face. He took the letter from his pocket, without knowing that by so doing he was rendering their trip to Capetown a dead certainty, and walked to the skipper's cabin. He paused for a moment before he knocked, and the junior partner of the unhappy firm laughed. That laugh gave Sloggett the necessary stimulus to action, and he tapped very mildly at Jordan's cabin.

"Come in," roared the skipper, in a voice like a distant thunderstorm, and Sloggett did as he was bid, and did it as mildly as he had knocked.

"Oh, captain I forgot to tell you that I brought you a letter from the office which came just as I was leavin' it."

"Put it down then," said the skipper in anything but a conciliatory tone. But Sloggett was not put off by that. He could not conceive that anyone would not come off his perch at the sound of money.

"I want to talk to you about raisin' your screw, captain," he said, with an obsequiousness which was very rare with him. "I want to talk with you on the subject of raisin' your screw."

"I don't want to have any conversation with you or any of your partners," said the skipper truculently; "and if you have any thing to say on that or any other subject, you can say it when I come to dinner."

"Oh, very well," said Sloggett. "I am sorry I have disturbed you, but I forgot to tell you that I 'ad a letter for you, and that was really why I came in."

"I told you to put it down, didn't I?" asked the skipper. "So do it and get."

Sloggett withdrew like a dog with his tail between his legs, and went back to his friends and reported that Jordan was mad and intract-

able. And in the meantime the 'old man' took his letter and stared at it.

"By crumbs," said Jordan, "it's from the poor old girl that always wanted to marry me! It is three years since she proposed last, and I thought she had got tired of it. If she hasn't I'm blowed if I won't think of doin' it after all."

He opened the letter eagerly, and when he had read it he sighed and said —

"Poor old girl, well, well, well! Who would have thought it?"

He walked up and down his narrow cabin, and as he did so he shook his head. Nevertheless there was quite another look in his face from any he had worn since he had piled up the *Grimshaw Hall*. He stood quite upright, and threw back his shoulders and took in a long breath.

"I'm devilish glad that I broke with this gang of robbers before I knew," he said. "I feel like a man again. Poor old girl! I'm almost sorry that I did not marry her after all. I'll tell this to Thripp and Cade. They shall share in this or I'm a Dutchman of the very worst kind."

He walked past the sad consulting partners, and looked more haughty than ever, and yet more good-tempered.

"I'm very much afraid that he has 'ad good news in that letter," said Gruddle, "for if 'e has it may make 'im more hindependent."

"I don't see 'ow 'e can be more independent than 'e 'as been," remarked Shody. "When a captain gets independent enough to call the firm that owns 'im an infernal lot of 'ogs, that seems to me the very 'eight of independence."

But, as a matter of fact, Jordan was more independent. He went up to Thripp, who was on the bridge, with a curious expression of mixed joy and sadness.

"You remember that poor old girl that I told you of, Thripp?"

"The one that hankered to marry you?" asked Thripp.

"The same," said the skipper. "She has pegged out, the poor old girl, at least she says she has."

Thripp stared.

"What do you mean by that, sir? How could she say so?" he asked.

The skipper showed him the letter that he had just received.

"Sloggett brought it on board, and gave it me just now as he came crawlin' to my cabin and let on a lot of slush about raisin' my pay agin' that they had just cut down, because they have tumbled to the fact that I've a down on them and the likes of them, and mean to get even by takin' them to Capetown. And she says in the letter that she isn't long for this weary lonely world (those are her words, and they make me feel as if I'd been ungrateful and ought to have overlooked the fact that she wasn't pretty), and that when she dies the letter is to go to me at once, and from that I draw the conclusion that she is dead, don't you see?"

"I see," said the mate. "But does she say anything else? She hasn't left you a ship by any chance?"

"Not to say a ship," said Jordan, shaking his head, "but what's as good. It appears that she naturally let on that she owned ships, bein' a woman and a little inclined to brag, not havin' good looks to fall back on, and it turns out that she was in the tug and lighter line in Hartlepool, and, as I gather, doin' well enough, and makin' money with three good tugs and a number of lighters and barges not named, as

well as a coal-yard with a well-established connection, and she has left the whole thing to me."

"I congratulate you," said Thripp. "Now you are really independent and can go for Gruddle & Co. just as you like."

The skipper nodded.

"So I can, Thripp, so I can; but it is a great pleasure to me to think that I told 'em the truth and called 'em hogs before I had had this letter. Thripp, I feel more like a man than I have done since the very painful day that I had my certificate suspended. Now I'll go and tell Cade. He'll be glad to know it."

He turned to leave the bridge, when Thripp sighed.

"I suppose if you do take 'em on to Table Bay we shall get all the dirty kick-out there, sir?" said Thripp in rather a melancholy tone of voice.

The skipper laughed jovially.

"Of course we shall, Thripp, but think of the satisfaction of doin' it! Oh, but I'm a happy man this hour! And if you can guess what I mean to do in addition to takin' them where they by no manner of means want to go,

I'll stand you a bottle of their champagne, of which I mean to have some or bust."

"It's all very well for you now, with your tugs and your lighters and a coal-yard," grumbled Thripp, "but what about me and Cade, and our wives?"

The 'old man' stared at his chief officer in the very greatest surprise.

"Why, didn't I say that I wanted you and him to come into the business with me, if you ain't too proud to be the skipper of a tug and manage lighters and a coal-yard?"

"You never said a word about it," said Thripp with a pleased and happy smile. "But if you mean that, I'm in with you, sir, and anything you like to do with the firm shall have my heartiest support, even if you go so far as to turn 'em for'ard to work."

Jordan looked at him with the intensest surprise.

"How in the name of all that is holy and righteous did you guess it?" he asked with wide-opened eyes. "Thripp, my man, that is my intention, and no mistake about it. But keep it dark, and I will wake up Cade and make him joyful, a thing he very rarely is, for his

career havin' not been a success appears to weigh on his mind, and his missis is a tartar, as I judge. Women worship success, and the fact that the poor old girl that has left me these tugs knew that I came to grief, and yet offered to marry me in spite of it, touched me at the time as much as the tugs do now."

In five minutes there were three exceedingly happy officers on board the *Nemesis*. Such a thing had not happened in one of Messrs. Gruddle & Company's boats since there had been such a firm. But now there were four very unhappy partners.

"I can't think why they are so happy," said Gruddle when the skipper and the mate came down and began their dinner, "but I feel sure it don't mean any good to us. I never was in such a position, and I don't believe it ever happened before that the owners of a vessel was in such a one. Oh, what shall we do if he won't go to Gib?"

At his instigation a bottle of champagne was sent over to the captain's table.

"Don't you understand, Butterworth," said the senior partner, when Butterworth objected, "that we are in a persition that is, I may say,

unparalleled? A captain has an awful lot of power, and I gather from 'is be'aviour that 'e knows it. In the office we gave 'im all proper orders for Capetown, and said nothin' about Gibraltar, because you hadn't been fool enough to suggest it then. If 'e won't go there we can't make 'im, so if a little kindness and a bottle of champagne will do it it is very cheap at the price."

"I would like to murder 'im," said Butterworth, but the champagne was sent over to the skipper's table all the same. It was returned quite courteously, or, at anyrate, without any demonstration of hostility, and the partners knew then that war had been declared, and that peace could be obtained at no price, do what they would. They put it all down to the letter that Sloggett had given him, and they attacked Sloggett, who in revenge drank far more wine than he could stand, and went first for one of them and then for another, and finally got up enough steam to swear at the captain. In one minute and fifteen seconds by any good chronometer Mr. Sloggett was in irons, and in a spare berth without anything to furnish it. Captain Jordan was himself again, and not

the kind of man to put up with anything from anybody.

When Sloggett was quiet and subdued, the skipper told them in a few brief but well-chosen words what he and his officers and the whole ship's company thought of them. He told them his opinion of their charity, and of the wages they paid, and of the grub they put on board their vessel. He went on to state in very vivid language what was said of them all the world over, and then paused for a reply, which they did not give him. He asked them what they thought of themselves, and whatever they thought upon that subject they did not venture to state it. He asked Thripp if he would like to say anything, and Thripp did make a few remarks about things the captain had omitted. Then Jordan asked them if they would like to hear Mr. Cade on the subject, for if so Mr. Thripp could relieve the second officer for a few minutes. They expressed no anxiety to hear any more counsel for the prosecution, and then Gruddle made a heart-rending appeal for mercy.

"Oh, take us into Gibraltar, captain, and we will forgive you all, and even raise your pay

to what you think is the proper figure. Oh, don't take us to Capetown, for there isn't food enough, and I shall die of indigestion."

"There is plenty of food," said Jordan. "Oh, there is heaps of grub such as Mr. Shody sent on board himself, and as a lesson I'm goin' to take you to South Africa, and I hope to the Lord that you will survive it."

Shody shivered; he knew what bad pork was like. Gruddle, as a Jew, was no judge of it. But the beef was even worse than the pork, and the men for'ard were almost in mutiny about it already.

"But food like that is only fit for men who are doin' hard work," said the unlucky Shody. The skipper's eyes flashed and then twinkled.

"Is that so?" he said. "If it is so, there seems to be a remedy."

What the remedy was he declined to state, and the firm declined to believe that it could be the one that occurred to them all with dreadful vividness. Oh, no, it could not be that! Captain Jordan left them thinking, and retired into privacy for the remainder of the night. The trouble of wondering what was to happen to them came to an end in the morning,

when by some strange chance, if it was a chance, the deck hands came as a deputation to the captain and laid a complaint against the grub. Jordan requested the presence on deck of the partners, and they knew better than to refuse.

"What you have to say about the food will be better said before the owners, my men," said the skipper. "As you know, they happen to be on board."

As he spoke they crawled on deck, looking very unhappy. The steward, Smith, who began to see how the land lay, and treated them with far less respect already, told them what the trouble was.

"The men for'ard says the grub is rotten, gents, and they are furious and fightable about it. Oh, they are savage and very 'ostile."

That was distinctly calculated to cheer them up, and they were as cheerful as if they were ordered three dozen at the gangway. With them went Sloggett, who had been released from irons.

"Oh, here you are, gentlemen," said the skipper cheerfully. For the first time since he had been an officer all his sympathies were with the men. He was no longer the captain only, he

was also a man, and he understood their point of view. "I thought it best that you should hear the men's complaints about the food. Now then, my men, what have you to say?"

The spokesman of the crew stood in front of the rest, and after some half-audible encouragement from his fellows he burst into speech.

"The grub is 'orrid, sir. Oh, it is the 'orridest that we was ever in company with. The pork stinks raw or boiled, and the beef fair pawls the teeth of the 'ole crowd. The biscuit is full of worms, and what isn't is as 'ard as flint. The butter makes us sick, sir. And not to make a song about it, but to cut it short, we are bein' starved."

"I'm sorry to hear it," said the captain. "But I am not responsible for the food, men, and when we get to Capetown I'll do my best to see that better stores are put on board. For the stores that you speak of Mr. Shody is responsible."

"If they are bad I 'ave been imposed on," said Shody; but the men made audible and disrespectful remarks which the captain suppressed at once.

"That will do. Go for'ard and I'll see what can be done."

There was only one thing that could be done, and he did it then and there. He had all the provisions that the partners had brought aboard divided among the men for'ard. He sternly refused Thripp's suggestion that the afterguard should share the plunder. Even more, the remaining bottles of champagne went the same way, and for the first time in their lives the deckhands and stokers had a real glass of wine that had cost someone ninety shillings a dozen. The firm stood by in mute misery.

"That's the beginnin'," said the skipper sternly, and not one of them had the pluck to ask him what he meant. Gruddle went in tears to Thripp and asked him.

"You're the worst of the lot, you are," said the independent mate, "and I decline to tell you. But I've no objection to throw out a dark 'int that this boat is undermanned all round both on deck and in the stokehold. Does the thought that that gives rise to in your mind make you curl up? Oh, Gruddle, all this is real jam to us, and we mean to scoff it to the very last spoonful. It will do us good!"

Gruddle grasped him by the sleeve.

"Oh, Mr. Thripp, if you'll 'elp us out of 'is

'ands we'll make you the captain and give you anythin' you like to ask for in reason."

"Would it run to a thousand pounds, do you think?" asked the mate.

Gruddle groaned horribly, but said that he thought it might run so far.

"Then let me tell you," said Thripp, "that Jordan is an old pal of mine, and I wouldn't go back on him for ten thousand, or even more. And over and above that, my son, I wouldn't lose the sight of you trimmin' coal in a bunker for the worth of the firm."

He left Gruddle planted to the deck, a wretched sight for the gods, and promptly told Jordan of the offer that had been made to him. Jordan nodded.

"I ain't surprised," said Jordan. "But, after all, Gruddle is by no means the worst of the gang, and I won't send him down into the stokehold. I mean to keep that for Shody. And I want you to understand that I ain't doin' this out of revenge, but out of a sense of public duty."

He quite believed it, and Thripp saw that he did.

"It's all hunky so far as I'm concerned,"

said Thripp, "and I hope that you will put Butterworth in Cade's watch and Sloggett in mine."

That was exactly what the skipper had decided on, and he was much surprised to see that Thripp had fathomed his mind.

"To-morrow by noon we shall just about be abreast of Gib, and a long way to the west of it," said Jordan. "I'll give 'em liberty till then, and when I send 'em for'ard I will tell 'em how near Gib is. It will serve them right. I will do it without visibly triumphing over them, Thripp, for I don't believe in treadin' on those who are down."

"No more do I, sir," said the mate, "not unless they thoroughly deserve it."

He left the captain pondering over the situation, and presently imparted to Butterworth the fate in store for him. As Butterworth had nothing whatever to say he went on to the bridge and told Cade of the joy to come. Cade was very magnanimous.

"I'll treat him no worse than any of the others," said Cade with a smile, "no worse."

"That's good of you," said Thripp.

"Not a bit worse," said Cade again. "They

are a holy lot of ruffians in the starboard watch, as you know, and I'll give them all socks if they don't look out. I tell you, sir, that I'm about sorry for Butterworth in that gang. Almost, but not quite."

He had a habit of repeating his words, of chewing the cud of them, and Thripp heard him once more mumble to himself that he was almost sorry, 'but not quite.' The mate knew that the one who would be quite sorry was Butterworth. He also had suspicions that Mr. Sloggett as a deck hand under his own supervision was likely to learn many things of which he was at present ignorant. He went to the engine-room and saw the chief engineer. To him he revealed the interesting fact that Shody was to be made an extra hand on the engine-room staff. Old Maclehose grinned like a monkey at the sight of a nut.

"Weel, weel, and do you say so?" asked Mac. "That is most encouragin', and it's more than whusky to me. He's the man that is responsible for all the stores, is he not, Thripp?"

Thripp said that he was.

"My boys will kill him, I shouldna wonder,"

said Mac. "But if they should, I'm hopin' it will be an accident, Thripp."

He wiped his hands with a lump of waste, and thereby signified that he wiped his hands of Shody's untimely decease.

"The oil is bad," said Mac. "I'm of a solid opeenion that Shody won't be so oily after we are through the tropics as he is the noo."

He said no more. He was a man of few words. Thripp knew he could be trusted for deeds. He went on deck and was almost sorry for Shody. The partners were quite sorry for themselves, and felt as helpless as flies in the web of a spider. They ceased to struggle, and when the usual grub of the *Nemesis* was served to them by an insolent steward, who cared no longer for their authority, they sat and did not eat it and said nothing.

The end came at noon next day, when they were all on deck in fine weather, with Gibraltar far away on the port beam. Old Mac came on deck and complained to the skipper that he was short-handed in the stokehold. Cade spoke up with a pleasant grin.

"You know, Mr. Maclehose, that we can't

spare you anyone from the deck. We're short ourselves, are we not, Mr. Thripp?"

"Two short at least," said Thripp, who also smiled as if he were pleased with the fact.

"I'll find you help," said Jordan, who was the only one who did not smile. He turned to the partners, who were clustered together in a sullen and disconsolate group.

"Do you hear, gentlemen, that the chief engineer is short of the hands he should have? I think I told you so in the office, and if I remember rightly, Mr. Shody said I would have to do on what the firm thought enough."

Shody turned as white as new waste, and then grew the colour of waste that has been used. The others fidgeted uneasily, but no one said anything.

"Under the circumstances I have concluded to give you the assistance of Mr. Shody," said the skipper.

"I won't go," roared Shody. "You can't make me. It is a crime, and I protest. Oh, it is scandalous!"

"You *will* go," said Jordan, "and I'll see that you do. I'm goin' to teach you all something, I can assure you. And if you don't

follow Mr. Maclehose at once, I'll have the stokers up to carry you down."

Gruddle implored the skipper to be merciful, and Jordan said that he would be.

"You are the oldest of the lot, Gruddle, and I have decided that I can best avail myself of your services by askin' you to assist the steward. The duties will not be heavy, and all you are asked is to be polite and willin'. You can now commence. If you stand there and argue I will put you into the stokehold along with Mr. Shody."

Gruddle did not attempt to argue. He was much too afraid that the captain would keep his word. He crawled down below and went to Smith, who set him to work on the light and easy task of cleaning out the captain's berth. While he was at it he heard loud yells from the main-deck, and was told by the steward that four stokers were carrying his partner Shody down below. Over what happened there a decent veil may be drawn. Old Maclehose and the engine-room complement had very little trouble with him and taught him a very great deal in a very short time. Sloggett, whose spirit had been taken out of him by being put in irons,

went to the mate's watch without a single kick; and though Butterworth began to say something, what he was about to tell them never got further than his lips. Cade caught him by the neck, and running him aft discharged him at the door of the fo'c'sle, and recommended him to the tender mercies of the watch below.

"There, that is done now," said Jordan. "I feel once more as if I was captain of my own ship, and as if I had performed a public duty."

"We may get into trouble, you know," said Thripp.

"Not at all," said the skipper. "They will never dare say a word about it, and when we anchor in Table Bay we'll lock them up, and skip ashore and start for England under other names right off. Timms of the *Singhalese* will be about sailin' the very day we should get there, and he'll be only too pleased to hear the yarn and give us a passage. In two months we'll be runnin' the tug and lighter business, Thripp, and Cade can run the coal-yard."

He smoked a happy pipe.

II

THE STRANGE SITUATION OF CAPTAIN BROGGER

"BROGGER is no class!" said the crowd for'ard in the *Enchantress*, a big barque belonging to Liverpool, and just then loading wheat at Portland, Oregon. "Billy Brogger is no class; but mean — mean to the backbone!"

They hated him worse than poison, for there are some kinds of poison that sailormen do not hate. And Jack Eales, who was the head and soul and mouthpiece of the starboard watch, for the hundredth time explained the reason of their hatred.

"On'y it ain't 'atred," said Eales, "it ain't 'atred. It's plain, straightforward despisery. I've sailed with rough and tough and 'ard skippers, and never 'ated 'em. But our 'old man' is religious without no religion. Oh, that's a mean thing, that is! And there's no pleasin'

of 'im. Never a decent word, nor a tot out of 'im if we works our innards out. The skipper ain't no class! 'E lets on to despise sailormen, and calls us ignorant. And what's 'is word for ever when 'e's jawin' — 'You no sailor, you!' And 'ere I am ready to lay my duff for a month of Sundays against 'alf a pint of dandyfunk that 'e couldn't make a four-stranded Mattie Walker to save 'is unsaved soul! Called me no sailor, didn't 'e, over a real nice job of wire splicin'! I'll bet the 'old man' couldn't do an eye splice in a piece of inch and an 'alf manilla without thinkin' about it. Those that know 'im say 'e was the clumsiest ass ever sent to sea. Went up six times for 'is second mate's stiff. Why, the mate and the second 'ere knows 'im for no seaman, and 'e's as 'andy with a 'ambone as a pig with a pianner. They two loaths 'im just as much as us!"

There was a deal of truth in the indictment, for Brogger would never have got a ship but for the fact that the chief owners of the *Enchantress* were his elder brothers.

"'Tis a pity we don't skip out here," said one of the men, "the old swine would have his work cut out to get a fresh crowd."

"Ay, it's a pity we're such a quiet, sober crowd," replied Eales, who on occasion was neither quiet nor sober; "but, as I showed you after our passage out 'ere, it would be money in Brogger's pocket and the owners' if we quit. And 'tis true 'e owns about three sixty-fourths of 'er 'imself. The boardin'-'ouse bosses are selling sailors at sixty dollars per 'ead. Flesh and blood are cheap to-day! I wish I could hinvent somethin' to get even with the 'old man' in this bally, rowdy, shanghain' old Portland. I'll give ten dollars to the son of a gun that gives me the least 'int of a working scheme to do it."

"D'ye mean it, Jack Eales?" asked the whole crowd.

"Don't jump down a man's throat simultaneous," said Eales indignantly, "for in course I means it. And what's more, I've got the stuff. I ain't relyin' on that blasted old devil dodger aft for no measly five bob a week. Since I took the pledge not to get drunk — real drunk, that is — more'n once a month, I can trust myself with money, and I've got it 'ere."

He kicked the chest on which he sat to show his bank.

" Blimy," said a young cockney called Corlett, who was the happiest chap on board, " I'll 'ave a shot for Jack's ten dollars ! "

" My chest's not locked," said Jack, and among so friendly a crowd the suggestion, which was the friendliest joke, was marked up to Eales as happy wit.

" I'm in the race for that purse," said Bush, who was the oldest seaman on board.

" We're all after it," said the crowd, and for days afterwards they chased Jack Eales with absurd proposals, the very least of which was a felony, and the most pleasing absolute piracy.

" Oh, go to thunder," said Jack, when a lump of a chap called Pizzey proposed to scuttle the *Enchantress* as she lay alongside the wharf.

" Oh, very well," said Pizzey, who was much hurt at the way his plan was received, " but I'll have you know that if you do it after all, that ten dollars is mine."

The nature of seamen is so childlike, so forgetful, so forgiving, that without further and continual irritation they would have talked till the vessel was towed down the Willamette and the Columbia, and for that matter all the way to Liverpool. But the skipper saw to it that they

had something to growl about. He kept them working a quarter of an hour after knock-off time three times a week. He cut down their usual five shillings a week to a dollar, on the ground that he was reckoning in dollars just then. The fresh grub he sent on board was enough, as they said in the fo'c'sle, to make a pig take to fasting. And he nagged and growled without ceasing till Plump, the mate, who was a very decent fellow, hated him worse than the crew did. He listened to the second mate Dodman, when Dodman burst out into long-suppressed bad language.

"I oughtn't to agree with you, but I do, I own it freely," said Plump, as they stood against the poop-rail and watched Brogger pick his way through the mud on the wharf. "I ought to tell you to dry up, Mr. Dodman, but I find it hard to do my duty."

"He's a miserable, mean, measly, growling, discontented devil," said Dodman in a red heat, as he mopped his forehead. "Comes and tells me I ain't fit to stow mud in a mud-barge. Ain't it true when he was second in this same old *Enchantress* he stowed sugar on kerosine? And if the old swab can rig a double Spanish

burton, I'll eat this belayin' pin. Our skipper's a know-nothing, sir."

"It's my duty not to listen to you," said Plump sadly. "I don't hear you, Mr. Dodman."

"Then I'd like to roar it through a speakin' trumpet," said the insubordinate second greaser. "I'd love to put it into flags, and let every ship in Portland learn the precious truth. Didn't he say it was your fault, sir, that Smith skipped out last night?"

"He did," said Plump darkly, "when he'd told the best worker in the ship that he was a soldier! Told him he was a soldier!"

With the land alongside, what could any self-respecting seaman do but go ashore after so dire an insult? They say at sea 'a messmate before a shipmate, a shipmate before a dog, and a dog before a soldier.' It was no wonder Smith skipped, and was just then roaring drunk in Lant and Gulliver's, who were the boss boarding-house masters in Portland, and bought and sold seamen as a ranchman might cattle.

And that very night Corlett came up to Jack Eales as he was going ashore, and put his hand on his shoulder. The young cockney had a

grin upon him which, properly divided, would have made the whole ship's company look happy.

"That ten dollars is mine," said Corlett. "Jack, you're ten dollars short. I wouldn't part with my claim on it for nine dollars and ninety-nine cents."

"We've 'eard too many rotten dodges lately," said Eales, "to take that in. What's the news now?"

But Corlett shook his head.

"I'm for the shore with you, sonny, and I'll tell you goin' along."

He bubbled as he walked, and every now and again burst into a roar of laughter, which was so infectious that Eales joined in at last.

"You *are* a funny bloke," said Eales; "and I'll say this for you, Corlett: I've never looked on you as a fool."

And Corlett sat down on a pile of lumber and laughed till he ached.

"Me a fool! Jack Eales, I'm the smartest cove on this coast. My notion's worth an 'undred dollars. It's as clear as mud, and as easy as eatin' good soft tack, and so neat that I wonder at myself. And it fits everythin'—everythin'."

"Then out with it," said Eales.

And Corlett came out with it.

"By Gosh!" said Eales — "by Gosh!"

He collapsed upon an adjacent pile of lumber and gasped.

"You've no right to be at sea," he said presently; "a man with your 'ead, Corlett, ought to 'ave a public-'ouse in a front street, and nothin' to pay for drinks. I've only three dollars on me. 'Ere's a dollar and an 'alf. I owe you eight-fifty."

He walked ten yards and came back again.

"You should 'ave bumps on your 'ead," he sighed. "This is hintellec', Corlett. It ain't mere cleverness, this isn't."

"You don't say so," said the cockney modestly.

"I do say so," replied Eales with great firmness; "I say it freely."

And they walked up town.

"You see," said Corlett, "'ow the 'ole thing stows itself away. It 'ardly needs management. Lant and Gulliver 'ates 'im, and they're that jealous of Shanghai Smith down in 'Frisco with 'is games, they'll jump at this. And then it's well known Mr. Plump ain't got 'is master's

ticket. And young Dodman on'y got 'is second's ticket a v'yge ago. There'll be no goin' back on it if the agents find the right man. By the 'Oly Frost, Jack, we'll diskiver yet if old Brogger is 'alf a bally seaman anyway."

"It's a merricle, Corlett, it's a merricle!" said Jack Eales. "I never quite properly understood what books I've looked into meant by the pure hintellec'. You're clean wasted at sea, so you are. To-night we'll think it over, and to-morrow you and me will go as a committee of deputation to Lant and Gulliver if we sees no flaw in the thing."

"Take my word, there ain't no flaw in it," said Corlett.

"I'm inclined to believe you," said Eales, almost humbly. "I never thought to own up that a man on board the *Enchantress* was my equal, let alone my superior."

He sighed, but Corlett encouraged him.

"'Tis on'y a fluke, Jack."

"No, no," said Jack; "no, no, this is real 'ead-work. I knows it when I sees it. I'm proud to be shipmates with you, Corlett. Shake 'ands again."

They shook hands, and presently Corlett

spent the one dollar and fifty cents which he had earned by pure intellect.

"Per'aps I'm a fool to be at sea," he said to himself. "I shouldn't wonder if Jack's right."

And next evening they walked up to Lant and Gulliver's, and demanded to see either or both of the partners in private.

"'Tis puttin' our 'eads in the lion's mouth to come 'ere," said Jack Eales, "and you and me will do well not to touch a drop, whatever these land-sharks offer, Corlett. Doped drinks ain't for me just now. So don't go large at all, my son."

"I won't," said Corlett, "if none of 'em don't offer me a drink three times, I can 'old off it, Jack. Sayin' 'no' once is tol'rable easy. I can squeeze out a second if it's a case of 'ave to; but what I dread's the third."

Jack Eales nodded.

"The third time's what proves a man's principles, I own. I've gone to four times more than once soon after bein' very much under the weather. But 'ere we are."

They came to Lant and Gulliver's boarding-house, the whole front of which was a saloon. It looked a 'tough' house, and it was tough

both inside and out. These gentry had a 'pull' in Portland which enabled them to do as they pleased, and the only thing that pleased them was to make money. Most of the other boarding-houses had been fined out of existence, owing to a law that Mr. Lant had lobbied for at Salem. His conduct in the matter had brought him much praise for noble disinterestedness. He had asked for fines of five hundred dollars for gross infractions of the law instead of fifty, and the unsuspecting Legislature said it was a splendid suggestion, and passed the Bill with unanimity. As a result, his rivals, who were comparatively poor scoundrels without his control of the police, shed their dollars once or twice and then went under, and he had a monopoly.

"Well, wot is it?" asked Lant, who had the eyes and jaws and nose of a pugilist, and the domed skull of a philosopher. "Wot's the trouble here? What ship are you off of?"

"We wants a private talk with you, sir," said Eales, who had never met Lant before, and was more scared of him than he would have been of any admiral. For Lant and Gulliver's reputation is world-wide — all men who go down to the sea in ships know them.

He wrinkled his brows at them and considered for a moment. Then he led the way into the private snuggery, in which as much scoundrelism had been concocted as if it had been the head office of a great Trust or the Russian Foreign Office.

"Spit it out," said Lant as he sat down.

"We're in the *Enchantress*, sir," said Eales.

"And you want to get out, eh? What's my runners about? Haven't they bin aboard of you yet?"

He frowned savagely, and Eales hastened to acquit any of his myrmidons of such gross negligence.

"Oh, yes, sir," he said, "they've been down every day, but on'y one man 'as quit. We don't want to leave 'er, but we ain't satisfied with the skipper, sir, and we know, or at least we suspect, that 'e ain't no favourite of yours neither, Mr. Lant, sir."

"Well, and if he ain't?" said Lant.

"'E do abuse you something awful; don't 'e, Corlett?"

"Awful," said Corlett; "it's 'orrid to 'ear 'im."

"And 'e shipped nearly all real teetotallers

to do you in the eye, sir," said Eales, " for 'e said, sir, as no sober man would 'ave nothing to do with you."

" Are you a teetotaller? " asked Lant.

" To-day I am," said Eales hurriedly. " I was drunk yesterday, and the day after I can't look at an empty bottle even without cold shivers, sir. And it's the same with my mate; ain't it, Corlett? "

" The sight of a tot would make me sick," said Corlett plaintively.

" Well, well," said Lant, " what's your game? Spit it out, I say. I can't give all my time to hearin' you've not the stomach of a man between you. Now, quick, what is it? "

But Eales stood first on one leg and then on the other.

" You, Corlett! "

" No, not me," said the seaman of pure intellect.

" Well, then, sir, Mr. Lant, does you 'ave any sort of respect for Captain Brogger, or would you like to get even for 'is most unkind language respectin' you? "

Lant looked him up and down, and for a moment was inclined to break out violently.

But he hated Brogger, who had injured his prestige once before by taking out of Portland every man he brought into it, and he was curious besides.

"Suppose I'd like to do him up complete-ly," said Lant, staring at Eales hard.

"And make 'im fair redik'lus and the laughin' stock of the 'ole coast?"

"That would suit me," said Lant. "It would fit me like a dandy suit of clothes."

"'E's the nastiest, meanest skipper as ever lay in the Willamette; ain't 'e, Corlett?"

"I never 'eard of a measlier," said Corlett, looking for a cuspidor in order to accentuate his verdict.

"Then 'ere's for tellin' Mr. Lant the 'ole thing," said Eales desperately. And when he was 'through' with his scheme, Lant lay back in his chair and laughed till he cried.

"It's great," he said, "it's great. Holy Mackinaw, it's great! And you say he's no seaman?"

"'E ain't even a thing in place of it, sir," said Eales.

"And you really won't drink?"

Eales looked at Corlett, and Corlett looked at Ealse.

"We wouldn't mind takin' a bottle down on board, sir," said Corlett, who once more proved his intellectual capacity.

"And mind you keep your mouths shut," said Lant.

"Wild 'orses shan't drag a word out of us, sir," said Eales, "for when my mate's drunk 'e's sulky, and I'm 'appy but speechless."

And down they went on board the *Enchantress* with their bottle, while Lant held a council of war with his chief runner.

. . . . . .

Portland is a hard place; there is no harder place in the world. San Francisco, for all its reputation, which it owes so greatly to the gold times, is a sweet and easy health resort compared with the trading capital of Oregon. Oregonians from all parts of the State say it is a selfish city, with no more sense of State patriotism than an Italian city of the fifteenth century had of national patriotism. But in these days Portland is beginning to get a trifle nervous about its reputation. It is beginning to get written about, and the truth is told occasionally as to what goes on there. This is why a sudden and

remarkable disappearance of Captain Brogger, two days before the *Enchantress* was due to be towed down stream to the ocean, caused rather more sensation than it might have done a few years ago. The newspapers took two sides, and regarded two hypotheses as needing no proof. The papers which were trying to make Portland smell sweetly in the nostrils of the mercantile world said that some of the boarding-house bosses might be able to clear up the mystery. They gave reasons for supposing that Brogger was not loved by the tyrants of the water-front. But other papers declared that he had been knocked on the head and dumped into the river by some of his own crew. One reporter declared that a more evil-looking lot of ruffians than the crowd on board the *Enchantress* never towed past Kalama. This journal was partially owned by Lant and Gulliver. They owned something of everything, even a judge. And the good police did what they were told, so long as it was possible. They set about a story that Brogger had committed suicide. The crew said he had been looking wild of late. Mr. Plump had no theory, and was only mad that he had no master's certificate. Young Dodman went

round whistling, in spite of the fact that he was the last man to have a real shine with the skipper.

"I hope he won't come back, that's all," said Dodman. "If he does I'm for the shore, boys; I'm for the shore. I've not known what it was to be happy for months till now."

But Plump grew haggard running to the police and the agents. The *Enchantress* was full up to the deck-beams with the best Oregon wheat, and was ready to go to sea. Every hour's delay meant a notch against him with the owners. And yet, as the owners were the missing skipper's brothers, he did not like to hurry. But the agents, who cared about no man's brother, put their foot down.

"We've found you a captain, Mr. Plump."

"What sort?" asked Plump anxiously.

"He's a good man and well recommended, and a thorough seaman."

"That'll be a change," said Plump. "Poor old Brogger was fit to skipper a canal-barge. All right, if you say so. We're ready if your new man is. All we want is another hand, and he's coming on board to-night if we sail to-morrow. We've had luck that way, whatever else has gone wrong. If Brogger had lived I

believe he'd have lost the whole crowd the way he was shaping. He grew meaner every day."

And that night the new skipper came on board. He shook hands with his officers, and in half an hour Plump had almost forgotten his want of a master's ticket, and Dodman was swearing by the new man; for Captain John Greig was a man, and no mistake! He was quick and hard and bright and humorous, and there was that about him which was better than any extra certificate — he looked a seaman, and was one. And he was as happy as he could be to get a good ship. The vessel in which he had been mate had gone home without him, owing to his getting smallpox.

"I think we shall do," said Greig. "I wonder what became of that old duffer Brogger? Well, it's an ill wind that don't serve some skipper. I'm a skipper at last, and with any luck I'll stay so."

Early next morning, just as the *Enchantress* was making ready to tow down the river, and when the whole world was still dark save where the dawn on the great peak of Mount Hood showed a strange high gleam to the eastward, Lant and Gulliver's chief runner came on board and saw the mate.

"The man we agreed to put on board is sick," said the runner, "and as all our crowd here is fixed up for, we've wired down to Astoria to our other house to send you a good man in his place."

"Right," said Plump, who was standing on the fo'c'sle head — "right you are. Ay, ay, sir, let go that head-line! Jump and haul — haul it in, men!"

The men were cheerful; there was something in the voice of a real man now on the poop that bucked them up. And they knew as well as Plump himself that he was happy to have got rid of Brogger. The *Enchantress* looked as if she was to be a happy ship on the passage home.

"You seem a derned happy family," said the runner to Jack Eales as he skipped ashore.

"So we are," said Jack. "But tell us what's the name of the chap that'll come aboard at Astoria."

"His name," said the runner — "his name — oh, it's Bill Juggins!"

For he knew that Jack Eales knew more than he 'let on.'

"The new man's name is Bill Juggins," he told Corlett five minutes later, as they began

to move swiftly down the smooth dark waters of the Willamette while the early lights of the town still gleamed and the snowy peak of Mount Hood was edged with roses in a rosy dawn.

"'Is name is Juggins!"

He slapped his thigh and laughed. They lay that night off Astoria, and before the tow-line was again made fast to pull her out over the great Columbia bar the new hand was put aboard in the usual condition of alcoholic coma with not a little laudanum mixed with it. He was stowed in a bunk in the fo'c'sle, where he lay just as they threw him. But Jack and Corlett were as nervous now as two greenhorns on a royal yard.

"I'm all of a bally twitter, I am," said Jack Eales. "D'ye know, Corlett, I ain't sure we ain't done after all. I don't believe I ever see this joker before. Brogger 'ad a beard."

"And Lant and Gulliver 'ad a razor," said Corlett.

"Brogger was pippy and pasty and white as —oh—as white," urged Eales, "and this josser is as black as a mulatter."

"Walnuts grow in Oregon," said the wise Corlett. "D'ye think we might let the crowd into the racket?"

"No, no, man," said Jack, "don't let nobody, know as we 'ad 'alf an 'and in it. The cove's name may be Juggins, but we'll be jugged."

They were well out to sea, and the tug was a blotch of smoke to windward, before Bill Juggins, A.B., showed the faintest sign of life. And even then they only heard him grunt as he turned over uneasily and went off on another cruise in the deep seas of sleep.

"If he works like he sleeps," said the crowd in the second dog-watch, "he'll be a harder grafter than Smith that skipped. It's a wonder the second ain't been in after him."

But the new skipper and Plump and Dodman hit it off so completely that they sat together on the poop and told each other all about everything in the happiest way. For Greig, though he was a hard enough man in his way, had the gift of creating good humour along with respect.

"It's a wonder what became of my lamented predecessor," said Greig.

"He's certainly dead, sir," said Plump.

"As dead as mutton," agreed Dodman.

"It would be a compliment to put the ship in mourning, as he owned a share in her," said Greig; "and I think I shall do it."

"There's enough blue paint on board, sir," said the second, "to put a fleet into mourning. I don't know how it came here, for Captain Brogger didn't care to be extra lavish with stores."

It was Dodman's way of saying the deceased skipper was as mean as his brothers.

"Very well," said Greig; "you can do it as soon as you like, Mr. Plump. These are customs which I hate to see die out. And now I think I'll turn in."

As he went he added —

"I believe we shall get on very well together, gentlemen."

Plump and Dodman said they were sure of it, and when he had gone below they said —

"He's all right."

At midnight Plump went below too, and Dodman walked the weather side of the poop in a happier frame of mind than he had known since he came on board the vessel in Liverpool. The wind was fine and steady out of the east, and the *Enchantress* slipped through the water very sweetly.

"Damme," said poor Dodman, "I believe I could sing."

He walked aft, looked at the compass, stared over the taffrail at the wake, looked aloft to see if the gaff topsail, which was an ill-cut and ill-conditioned sail, was in decent shape, and then whistled. Being right aft he did not see a short, dark man come from the fo'c'sle and stagger along the main-deck. But Eales and Corlett saw him and left the rest of the starboard watch, who were yarning quietly on the spare topmast lashed under the rail.

"'E's come to," said Eales. "Holy sailor, this is a game!"

Bill Juggins, A.B., laid hold of a belaying pin in the fife rail of the main-mast, and swayed to and fro like a wet swab in a cross sea.

"Where am I?" said Bill Juggins. "This is a nightmare. I want to wake."

He held tight and pondered. But his brain reeled.

"I have no beard," said the new seaman; "I'm clean shaved. My hair's that short I can't catch hold of it. These ain't my clothes. I can't stand straight. But if this ain't my ship I'm mad."

"D'ye 'ear the pore devil?" asked Jack.

"I 'ears," said Corlett. "If 'e 'adn't told

me I was a soldier I should say it was pafettick to 'ear 'im."

"This is a barque," said poor Juggins, "and so's the *Enchantress*. But she's at sea, and yesterday she was in Portland not ready to go for three days. This is a dream, it's an awful, awful dream. I'll wake up, I will, I will!"

He hung on the pin desperately, and as he stood there Dodman walked for'ard to the break of the poop. He whistled lightly.

"Dodman used to whistle," said the man in a nightmare. "I used to tell him I wouldn't have it. I said it was a street-boy's habit. I shall wake presently, oh yes."

"Who's that jabbering on the main-deck?" asked Dodman.

"It's me," said the jabberer weakly, as a cloud of laudanum floated over his brain. "It's me, and I don't know who I am."

But Dodman jumped as if he had been shot. This was a voice from the grave; there seemed no mistaking Brogger's wretched pipe. But before the second mate could speak Jack Eales intervened.

"'Tis the new 'and wot come aboard at Astoria, sir. 'Is name is Bill Juggins."

The man from Astoria wavered doubtfully and looked up at the poop.

"I know that voice," he murmured. "That's Dodman."

"The pore chap's very drunk yet, sir," said Eales.

"Take him away for'ard," said Dodman, with a gasp.

"My name — ny name's Brogger!" piped the man from Astoria.

"It's Juggins — Bill Juggins!" said Eales firmly, as he took him by the arm. "Brogger's dead, Juggins. 'E's dead and buried. Lant's liquor 'as been too much for you."

And Juggins burst into tears.

"I *thought* I was Brogger," he said feebly. "But poor Brogger had a beard."

"So 'e 'ad," said Eales; "and 'e was as white as veal, and you're a fine, 'ealthy, dark colour. Come back and doss it out, my son. The pafet-tick story of the pore chap's death 'as been too much for you."

He and Corlett led the man for'ard and put him in his bunk, where he wept copiously.

"What are you so sad about?" asked Corlett. "You're no better than a soldier!"

The whole watch crowded in after them.

"What's wrong?" they asked.

"The chap that's tanked up says 'e's Brogger," said Eales.

The whole watch laughed so that the port watch woke up and cursed them with unanimous blasphemy.

"But this josser says 'e's Brogger!" urged the starboard watch in extenuation of their gross infraction of fo'c'sle law.

"Then 'e's no seaman," said the sulky port watch, "for Brogger 'ardly knew 'B' from a bull's foot as a sailorman. Dry up, and let us go to sleep!"

But Brogger kept on saying he was Brogger, till Pizzey, the biggest seaman in the port watch, threatened to bash him if he wasn't quiet.

"But — but I know you all," said Brogger. "If I wasn't me, how should I?"

"More knows Tom Fool than Tom Fool knows," said Pizzey. And he used such horrible threats that the skipper was quailed and became quiet, and at last fell asleep.

And in the meantime Dodman went down below and woke up Plump, who was in his first sleep.

"What's wrong?" asked Plump, as soon as he found that he was being waked three hours before his time. "You're as white as putty, Dodman."

Dodman shook his head and could hardly speak. When he did speak, Plump fell back upon his pillow and gasped.

"Brogger ain't dead," said Dodman. "Mr. Plump, Brogger's on board."

"You're mad!" cried Plump.

"I wish I was," said Dodman. "This is a Portland plant — this is a coast game. They shaved him and browned him and drugged him, and he came aboard at Astoria as a foremast hand!"

There was a deep silence for at least five minutes, and then Plump said, almost with a wail —

"This is most disappointing!"

There was a strange look in Dodman's face; it was so strange that Plump sat up and looked at him.

"Between you and me, sir," said Dodman, "he used to make both of us uncomfortable."

"He did," said Plump.

"And he was no seaman."

"He wasn't fit to sail a paper-boat in a bath," said Plump.

"Then he's dead," said Dodman with a strange wink. And Plump's face lighted up slowly.

"He's still dead," said Plump. "And if the owners don't like it they can lump it. And, what's more, I don't believe our new skipper would stand aside now for any man that ever breathed."

"If he does he's not the man I take him for," said the second mate. "I shall get up that blue paint in the forenoon watch, sir."

"Get it up," said Plump. And in ten minutes he fell fast asleep again. For it takes more than a little to rob a seaman of his slumber. But at four bells in the morning watch he had to communicate the news to the new skipper, who was an early bird. He broke the news warily, for he dreaded lest the 'old man' should do something in a hurry which he and others might repent of afterwards.

"It would be a mighty strange thing, sir, if Captain Brogger wasn't dead after all," he remarked just a trifle nervously after Greig had walked the deck once or twice.

"He might rise up now and find his ship missing," said Greig with a chuckle. "After all, that's only what I did, Mr. Plump. I was crazy, luny, dotty, and raving with fever before I was taken out of the *Winchelsea*, and when I came to she was days at sea."

He marched up and down again.

"And a dashed good man got my billet," he said, "and now I don't envy it him. It was a bit of luck my getting this, Mr. Plump, though in a way I own I'm sorry that you couldn't have it. I know that's tough."

Plump sighed.

"I'd ha' had my ticket, sir, but for a fluke that a youngster going up for second mate might have been ashamed of. A plus for a minus, and I was minus. You wouldn't like to step down for Captain Brogger now, sir?"

"Minus Brogger is plus me," said Greig. "I'd not step down to loo'ard for all the Brogger family up from the tomb."

"No more would I, sir," said Plump. "But ——"

"But what?" asked the 'old man.'

And Plump gasped a bit.

"Last night, sir ——"

Greig stared at him curiously.

"Don't hang in the wind like that!" he said sharply. "What is it?"

Plump burst out with what it was, and told Greig in a fine flow of words what the second mate had said.

"By crimes!" said Greig. "By all that's holy!"

He walked the deck for a minute, and then came back and stood close to his mate.

"Have you seen this man?"

"No, sir."

"Did Mr. Dodman believe him?"

"Dodman isn't a fool, sir. No doubt it seemed to him that the man had heard the tale of the captain's disappearance, and, having been on the drink, he took it into his head that he is Brogger."

Greig turned his back to the mate and stared to windward.

"It's delirium tremens, of course," he said. "That's plain. I'll see him after breakfast, unless he's sober and comes to his senses."

He went below.

"Crawl down now, and for a ghost!" said Greig. "If I do, I'll be damned!"

And just then Brogger was sitting up in his bunk, chewing his fingers and trying to reconstruct the lost days. He had elusive visions of strange interviews, he tasted strange drinks, his head ached with horrid drugs, he recalled strange snatches of talk by strangers. And out of the phantasmagoria of his jumbled vision there came sometimes the powerful and brutal face of Lant, of the firm of Lant and Gulliver.

"Someone hit me!" he said aloud. And Jack Eales, who was wide awake, heard him.

"Where am I? I'm in a dirty fo'c'sle!"

He seemed to remember vaguely that he had been out on deck in the night. He looked up and saw Eales' face dimly.

"What ship's this?" he asked.

"It ain't a ship," said Eales; "this is hell!"

Brogger shook his head dismally.

"It ain't — you're jokin' with me! What am I doin' here? Is this my ship?"

"You was shipped in her," said Eales. "You came aboard in Astoria. Your name's Juggins."

"I'm Brogger — Captain William Brogger!" said Brogger.

"Hush, hush!" said Eales. "Don't say it.

All the men 'ere 'as sworn to 'ave Brogger's life if 'e's alive. They say Brogger was mean, and made them un'appy. 'E called good sailormen sojers; 'e give 'em bad grub; 'e wouldn't 'ave no clothes dried in the galley off the 'Orn; 'e never gave 'em no forenoon watch in. In the dirtiest weather he 'ad 'em makin' sennit between shortenin' and makin' sail. 'E wasn't no sailor, they says, to add to it all. And it's a sayin' 'ere that Brogger saved 'is life by bein' killed, same as the pig did 'is by dyin'. For Gawd's sake don't say you're Brogger, or there'll be blood knee-deep — if there's blood in Brogger!"

"I'll — I'll go aft," said Brogger tremulously.

"Don't you do it!" said Eales. "There's a new skipper on board; 'e's as fierce and 'ard as if 'e was a bucko tough out of a Western Ocean packet of the old days. 'E won't stand taffy, nor any sort of guff; but 'e'll jump on your stummick quick."

"Oh, what shall I do?" moaned Brogger. "Why, I know you! You're Eales!"

"And you're Juggins!" said Eales fiercely. And just then in came one of the port watch and banged a tin can.

"Starbowlines, ahoy! Turn out, you sleepers!" he roared. "Turn out, turn out, my bully boys!"

The starboard watch yawned and groaned and grunted, and showed unwilling legs, and at last crawled out upon their chests as the boys brought the tea and grub in.

"Holy Moses!" said big Pizzey; "don't I remember that there was one of the starboard watch that allowed he was Brogger?"

"This is 'im," said Corlett, pointing. And the whole crowd roared.

"'E's no more like old beast Brogger than I'm like the mate," said Pizzey contemptuously. For Plump was a nice-looking man, and Pizzey had a face like a bruised apple. "Where's your beard, Brogger?"

"It's — it's shaved," said Brogger.

"And where did you get them brown 'ands and that ma'og'ny face? Brogger was as white as muck," said Bush. "And, besides, 'e's dead, and there's no more in it than that."

"I'm goin' aft," said Brogger. "There's a dreadful mistake somewhere."

But Corlett caught him by the tail of his jacket and sat him down on a chest suddenly.

"Less talk and more work, shipmate. Eat your breakfast."

He helped the poor devil to a pannikin of tea and to a tin plate full of bad bacon.

"This tea's beastly," he declared.

"Brogger's notion of wot's fit for sailors," said Corlett. "Drink 'is 'ealth in it."

And Brogger drank. The hot infusion of the Lord knows what did him good. The fumes of fusel oil and the clouds of laudanum rolled away from him.

"I know 'em all," he said — "I know 'em, every one. This is my ship; this is the *Enchantress*. If it isn't, I'm mad!"

He rose up suddenly and made a bolt for the door, and ran aft. As his evil luck would have it, the very first person he ran against was the new skipper, who looked at him very fiercely.

"Where the devil are you running to?" asked Greig, giving him a push in the chest that sent him reeling.

"I'm Captain Brogger," said Brogger with the most lamentably weak air of dignity. It sat on him like a frock-coat on a gorilla.

"The devil you are?" said Greig. "So you're still drunk. Go for'ard, or I'll cure you quick!"

But just then Plump came for'ard to the break of the poop.

"Mr. Plump, Mr. Plump," cried Brogger. It has to be owned that the mate started just a trifle at the sound of his voice. "Mr. Plump, I'm Captain Brogger, and who's this?"

"Stop," said Greig, "stop right here. Mr. Plump, do you recognise this man?"

It was impossible to recognise him by anything but his voice, and Plump truly denied that he saw the least resemblance to the dead skipper.

"Call Mr. Dodman," said Greig. And Dodman said he couldn't see the faintest likeness.

"Then how do I know you all?" asked Brogger.

"It's my belief you sailed with us three voyages back," said Dodman. "I seem to have seen you somewhere."

"That will do," said Greig; "go for'ard and behave yourself, or you'll find out, whether you're Brogger or Juggins, or the Lord Muck from Bog Island, that I'm captain here. Bo'-son!"

The bo'son came from the galley, where he was taking in the situation with the cook.

"Set this man to work," said Greig, "and keep your eye on him."

And Brogger went for'ard like a lamb.

"It's cruel! it's cruel!" said Brogger. But in less than two shakes of a lamb's tail he found himself getting paint out of the bo'son's locker in company with Corlett and Jack Eales.

"What you've got to do, sonny," said Jack, who had half a mind to be sorry for him, "is to do your duty and do it smart and quick. Just now you're off-colour, so to speak, in spite of that 'ealthy complexion of yours, and you don't feel well. Exercise will do you good. We'll have you on a topsail-yard yet singin' out: ''Aul out to loo'ard' with the best." He turned to Corlett.

"What's all this bally paint for, Corlett?" he asked.

"Blamed if I know," said his mate.

But the other men were rigging up stages and getting them over the side, awhile the bo'son mixed the paint. It was blue, and Corlett stared hard at Eales.

"Well, I'm d-dashed," said Eales; "this is the queerest start!"

He watched the bo'son go up to the new hand and take him carefully by the collar.

"'Ere, you sculpin, take this pot and this brush and get down on this stage ——"

"What for?" asked Brogger. "I'm — I'm ——"

"Oh, no, you ain't," said the bo'son quickly, — "you ain't 'im by a long sight."

"It's blue paint," said Brogger weakly. "It's blue."

"Very blue," replied the bo'son drily. "And all that's white you'll paint blue."

He half-lifted Brogger on the rail, and watched him clamber down upon the stage. A strange, quiet ripple of laughter ran along the men at work.

"I — I don't understand," said Brogger to Eales, who was sitting on the stage with him.

"It's a good sea compliment to them that's gone," said Eales. "Paint, you beggar, paint."

The bo'son put his head over the rail.

"If you don't get to work, Juggins, I'll have to come down there and talk with you."

And the man who was spoken to knew of old what a terror the bo'son could be if he liked. He shivered and dipped his brush in paint.

After he had made a few feeble strokes, the bo'son's head disappeared, and Brogger whispered to Eales —

"Who's it for?"

"It's for poor old Brogger," said Eales.

III

THE OVERCROWDED ICEBERG

THERE was a deal of ice about, and it came streaming south, in all kinds of shapes, right into the track of ships. There were flat-topped bergs and ice-fields, and there were all kinds of pinnacled danger-traps which were obviously ready to turn turtle and load up any unwary steamer with more ice than she would ever require to make cocktails with. That year ice was reported in great quantities as far south as latitude 40°, and there is every reason to believe that there was more ice run into than was ever reported by one unlucky liner and five tramps which were posted at Lloyd's as 'Missing.' The Western Ocean is no-peace-at-any-price body of water, and it tries those who sail it as high as any sea in the world, but when the Arctic turns itself loose and empties its refrigerator into the ocean fairway it becomes

what seamen call 'a holy terror.' For ice brings fog, and fog is the real sea-devil, worse than any wind that blows. It was a remarkable thing in such circumstances that Captain Harry Sharpness Spink of Glo'ster preserved his equanimity. As Ward, the mate of the *Swan of Avon*, said, he wasn't likely to preserve the *Swan*.

"Dry up, Ward," said his commanding officer, "be so good as to dry up. When I require your advice to run the *Swan* I'll let you know, but in the meantime any uncalled-for jaw on that or any other subject will make me very cross."

"Do you think you can like me since you went to see that swab at the Foreign Office?" asked Ward, as he edged towards Spink. "Don't you savvy, Spink, that I'm just as able as I was before to pick you up and sling you off of this bridge on to the main-deck?"

"That's as may be," said Spink, "and I don't deny by any means that you are a truculent and insubordinate beast. That's why I shipped you. But it don't follow by no means that because my unfortunate disposition compels me to have officers that can lick me, that I should let 'em navigate the *Swan* on the high

lonesome principle. As I said before, you will be so good as to shut your head. Ice or no ice, I'm going at my speed, not yours. Do you think you are out yachting that I should look after your precious carcase?"

"I believe you are ready to cast her away," said Ward. "Are the bally owners going shares with you?"

Spink shook his bullet head.

"They ain't, and you know it, Ward. There are men would take such an insinuation as an insult, and if I could lick you perhaps I would. But you know as well as I do that if I wanted to cast her away I'd not do it here. There's no kind of fun that I so despise as open boats in cold weather, and the Western Ocean in ice-time isn't my market for a regatta. I ain't called on to explain to a subordinate my idea in running full speed through this fog and ice, but out of more regard for your feelings than you ever show for mine I don't mind revealing to you that I'm trusting to my luck."

"Your luck!"

"Yes, my luck," replied Spink with great firmness; "for luck I have and no fatal error. I've been thinking of it a lot this trip, and come

to the conclusion that I've more solid luck than any man I know intimate. To say nothing of my commanding a rust and putty kerosine can like this old tramp at the age of thirty, when you, that can lick me in a scrap, have to be my mate though you're older, didn't I come out of that little affair at Aguilas with flying colours?"

"You came out with a hole in the funnel that you had to pay for yourself," said Ward. "I don't see where your luck came in."

"Don't you see it might have been worse, you ass?" cried Spink irritably. "But that's nothing. What I've been pondering over chiefly is my very remarkable luck in never having been caught, for a permanency, by any of the ladies that have been after me."

"They haven't lost much," said Ward discourteously. "And I reckon that you are mistook when you think you're that enticing that women hankers to drag you in by the hair of your head and kiss you by force."

"I never said so," replied Spink; "but the fact remains that I'm not married."

"You're a selfish beast, Spink, and I sincerely hope you'll be married before you're through," said Ward.

"You are the most insolent mate I ever had," replied Spink, "and the most unfeeling. Did you hear a fog-horn?"

Though it was in the middle of the forenoon watch it was pretty nearly as dark off the Banks as it would have been inside a dock warehouse, for the fog was as thick as a blanket. The rail and the decks were slimy with it, and the skipper and his mate were as wet as if it had been raining. The fog came swirling in thick wreaths, and sometimes half choked them. The wind from the north-east was light but very cold, as if it blew off the face of an iceberg, as it probably did. The *Swan* had an air of thorough discomfort, and in spite of it was steaming into the west at her best speed of nine knots an hour.

It is no wonder that Spink and Ward quarrelled; there was hardly a soul on board who was not in a bad temper. Nothing disturbs seamen as much as fog, and the fact that Spink refused to be disturbed by it made it all the worse for the others. Ward was distinctly nervous, and let the fog play on his nerves. He saw steamers ahead that had no existence, and heard fog-horns that were nothing but the sound of his own blood in his ears.

"Yes, I do hear a fog-horn. It's on the starboard bow," he said anxiously.

"Not a bit of it, Ward, it's on the port bow. It's some darned old wind-jammer. I'll give her a friendly hoot."

He made the whistle give a melancholy wail, which was not answered by the ship for which it was intended, but by a gigantic liner which burst through the fog looking like high land, and booming at the rate of at least twenty knots. She loomed over them in the obscurity, and Ward gave an involuntary howl which fetched the *Swan's* crowd out on deck in time to see that there was no need to kick their boots off and swim for it. They were also in time to answer the insulting remarks of the liner's two officers on the bridge, as she scraped past them with about the length of a handspike to spare.

"You miserable, condemned tramp," said the liner as she swept by.

"Oh, you man-drowning dogs," replied the crowd on the *Swan*.

And everything else that was said never reached its mark. The liner was swallowed up, and resumed her attempt to make a good passage in spite of what she logged as 'hazy' weather.

" What did I tell you about my luck? " asked Spink coolly, and Ward very naturally had nothing to say till he got his breath. What he said then could only have been said to a skipper who had so unfortunate a disposition towards violence that he had to ship officers who could lick him.

" You are a wonder," said Ward, " and I wish you had been dead before I saw you. Ain't you thinking of others' lives if you ain't of your own? "

" What's the use of arguing with a thick-head like you, Ward? " asked Spink. " If that blamed express packet slowed down to our jog-trot her skipper would feel as sick as if he had anchored, and he'd log it ' dead slow,' and the rotters that judge divorces and collisions would call him the most praiseworthy swine that ever ran another ship down. What's the logic of it? Why should I daunder along at five knots? I might be lingering just where I'd be caught by such another or by a berg. I trust in Providence and my luck, and if you don't like it you can get out and walk."

At this moment a bellow was heard for'ard, ' Ice on the starboard bow,' and Spink, who

for all his talk had the eyes of a cat, motioned to the man at the wheel to starboard the helm a few spokes. The *Swan* ground past a small berg, and had a narrower shave than with the liner.

"If we'd been going a trifle slower, Ward," said the skipper, "I might have plugged that lump plump in the middle, and you would have been down on the main-deck seeing the boats put over the side."

"There's no arguing with you," growled the mate, "you'd sicken a hog, and I wish it was Day's watch instead of mine. If he has the same temper when he wakes that he went below with, you'll have a dandy time with him."

He relapsed into a silence which Spink found more trying than open insubordination, for Spink was a cheerful soul.

"Here, I can't stand this, Ward ——"

"What can't you stand?" asked Ward sulkily.

"Not being spoken to, of course," replied the skipper. "I order you to be more cheerful. I don't ask you to be polite, for I know you can't be; but you can talk when you aren't wanted to, so you just talk now."

"I won't unless you slow down," said Ward. "I don't see why I should talk and be cheerful with a sea-lunatic."

"Well," said Spink, "I'll slow her down to half speed to please you, for the Lord knows there's enough ice about without my having a lump of it for a mate. Ring her down to half speed, and be damned to you!"

Ward rang her to half speed without any second order.

"And I sincerely hope I shan't regret bein' weak enough to give way," said Spink, "for I'm a deal too easy-going and reasonable."

He lighted his pipe and smoked steadily. As both Ward and Day admitted, he might be hard to get along with, but he had nerves which would have done credit to a bull. Most skippers in the Western Ocean get into the state of mind which sees disaster before it is in sight, and if they don't take to drink it is because they die of continued scares. Spink feared nothing under heaven, and though he sometimes drank more than was good for him, it was not because he wanted it, but because he liked it. There is a great distinction between these two ways of drinking. After a few minutes of silence he turned to Ward.

"Do you feel easier in your mind, Ward?"

"I do," said Ward. "I own it freely."

Spink snorted.

"As sure as ice is ice when you get a command of your own you'll take to drink," said Spink. "And now, as you're satisfied at getting your own way, I'll go below and have a snooze."

About six bells in the forenoon watch the *Swan* ran out of 'Bank weather' into beautiful sunlight, and Ward rang her up to full speed. All about them were icebergs small and large, which sparkled like jewels in the sun. There was one long, low berg right ahead of them, there was one to the south'ard which was peaked and scarped and pinnacled into the semblance of a mediæval castle. Ward, as Spink said, had no soul for beauty unless it wore petticoats, and to him, as to all seamen, ice in any shape was ugly.

"If he'd had his way she'd have come a mucker on that beggar ahead," said Ward, as he passed to windward of the big, table-topped berg. "I wish we was out of it. This fine spell won't last long, and there is more thick weather ahead of us or I'm a Dago."

He gave her up to Day at noon with pleasure,

and took his grub alone as the skipper was fast asleep. When he turned out again at four o'clock he found the fog as thick as ever, and Bill Day as cross as he could stick at having to yank the whistle laniard every minute or so. As soon as Ward showed his nose on the bridge Bill let out at him.

"What kind of a relief do you call this?" he demanded savagely. "I wish I'd had this laniard round your neck, I'd have had you out of your bunk in good time, I swear."

As a matter of fact, Ward was only three minutes behind time, and always prided himself on giving a good relief.

"Has Double Glo'ster been worrying you that you're so sick?" he asked. "You know damn well that you owe me hours. Oh, don't talk, go below and die, as you always do when you see blankets. Has there been much ice?"

"It's blinking all round the bally shop," returned the second mate. "Didn't you wake when I stopped her dead?"

"No," said Ward.

"And you talk of my dying when I get below," retorted Day. He slid off the bridge, and proceeded to justify the mate's accusation by

falling asleep before his head touched the pillow, in spite of the melancholy hootings of the *Swan* as she picked her way delicately in the fog and ice. It was very nearly eight bells again before Captain Harry Sharpness Spink of Glo'ster showed on deck. As he meant to stay on deck all night he had really been very moderate.

"So I've missed Newcastle?" he said.

"Lucky for you," returned Ward; "his temper was horrid."

Spink sighed.

"I'm the most unfortunate man that ever commanded any blasted hooker that ever sailed the seas," he said. "Day tries me more than you do, Ward. There are times I regret I ever knew him. I must have been brought up badly to have such a disposition as I have. Well, well, it can't be helped, a man is what he was meant to be, there is no get-away from that. But I should admire to see you plug him. Oh, I say, it's fairly thick, ain't it?"

It was a deal thicker than much of the pea-soup served up in the *Swan*, though Spink rather prided himself on the way the men were fed in her.

"Are you nervous?" asked Spink.

"I ain't by any means happy," said Ward; "and no seaman worthy of the name can be happy on the Banks in weather like this."

"That's a slur on me, I know," said Spink, "but I overlook it."

"What would you do if you didn't?" asked Ward.

Spink did not reply to this challenge, and inside of a minute both he and Ward had something to think of besides quarrelling about nothing. The fog lifted for a moment, and showed ice all about them. The air grew bitterly cold, and was soon close on the freezing point. Spink slowed her down again, and almost literally felt his way through the obstacles. Once he touched a small berg, but when he did so he was going dead slow. Ward stood by and saw the 'old man' handle the *Swan* with admiration. When they were once more through the thick of it he spoke.

"I wish I could understand you, Spink," he said, with far more respect than he often showed. "You're the most reckless skipper I ever sailed with, and now you're more careful than I should be."

"I don't trust in my luck till I can't see," said

Spink, and he turned her over to Ward, saying, "Go your own pace, my son. It's most agreeable when you are civil."

And next minute the catastrophe happened, for at half speed the old *Swan* bunted her nose into a low but very solid berg, and the result was very much the same as if she had tried conclusions head on with a dock wall. She crumpled up like a bandbox when it is inadvertently sat on, and it would have been obvious to the least instructed observer that her chance of going much farther was a very small one indeed. She trembled and was jarred to her vitals, her iron decks lifted up like a carpet with the wind underneath it, one of the funnel stays parted with a loud twang, and the crowd forward came out on deck as if the devil was behind them. And the fog was still so thick that it was impossible to see them from the bridge. But they soon saw Bill Day, for even his ability to sleep through most things could not stand being thrown out of his bunk.

"What's up now?" roared the second mate. And the skipper showed at his very best.

"Ward would have her at half speed," said Spink coolly, "and that gave the southerly

drift time to bring that blasted berg just where it could do its work."

And poor Ward hadn't a word to say. Spink had plenty. He spoke to the crew below.

"Keep quiet there you," he snapped, without the least sign of a disturbed mind. And up came the chief engineer, M'Pherson, in pyjamas and a blue funk.

"What's happened, captain? Oh, what's gone wrang the noo?" he cried.

"She's hit more than a penn'orth of ice, Mr. M'Pherson," replied the skipper, "and if I were you I'd get my clothes on. Tell me what water she is making, and look sharp. Mr. Ward, see to the boats. Mr. Day, take the steward and a couple of hands and get some stores up on deck."

He was so cool that he inspired unlimited confidence, although it was now obvious to them all that the *Swan's* very minutes were numbered. It did not require old Mac's report that the water was coming on board like a millstream to show them that. The engineers and firemen came on deck, and Spink addressed them in what he considered suitable and encouraging terms.

"Now then, you stokehold scum, less jaw there, you won't get drowned this trip."

They were exceedingly glad to hear it, for a lot of them were of a different opinion and said so. There was no time to waste, and indeed none was lost. The real trouble began when it was found that one boat wouldn't swim, after the manner and custom of boats in the Mercantile Marine, and when another was staved in by a swinging lump of ice the moment it took the water. This lump was a small 'calf' of the larger berg which they had struck on, and the next moment the original obstacle swung alongside and ground heavily against the steamer.

"There ain't enough boats," said the skipper. "Mr. Ward, d'ye think you could hook on to that berg? We'll have to board it and make out as best we can."

As the *Swan* was a vessel of close on fourteen hundred tons, her kedge anchor ought to have weighed something like four and a half hundredweight. As a matter of fact it had once belonged to something in the shape of a tug, and it weighed barely two. Ward picked it up as if it was a toy and hove it on the berg, and followed it with a warp.

"Bully for you," said the skipper, and as he spoke the *Swan* gave forth a noise very much like a hiccup. "Down on the ice the port watch, and the others get the stores over the side. Steward, all the blankets you can get. Mr. Day, put over the side anything to make a raft of; we may want one if the berg melts."

Spars and hencoops and everything that would float went over the side, some of it on the ice and some of it into the water. A couple of hands in the only sound boat kept her clear of the berg and the *Swan*, and shoved the floating dunnage to those on the new vessel, which had promptly been christened 'The Sailors' Home.' Their late home was about to disappear, and said so in terms that were quite unmistakable by the initiated.

"Now then," said Spink, "when the rest of you are over the side I'm ready. Ward, take the chronometer as I lower it down. And be careful with this bag, there's the ship's papers and my sextant in it."

"Now boom her off," said Spink, "for the *Swan's* going."

There was a tremendous crack on board.

"The fore bulkhead," said Spink, and then

the poor old *Swan* cocked her stern in the air. A furious gush of steam came up from the engine-room and all the stokehold ventilators, until the sea came almost level with the after hatch.

"She's going down head-foremost," said the crew, "poor old *Swan*."

And then there was a mighty shivaree on board. The whole of the cargo in No. 1 and No. 2 holds fetched away, and evidently shot right out at the bows. All this mixture of cargo must have been followed by the engines slipping from their beds, for instead of doing a dive head-foremost, the *Swan's* stern, which had been high in air, went under with a big splash, and she lifted her ragged bows in the fog before she went down with a long-drawn, melancholy gurgle.

"She warn't such a bad old packet after all," said the sad crew. And for at least a minute no one said another word. Then Ward spoke.

"Where the hell's your luck now, Spink?"

"What's become of your theory that half speed in a fog is any better than going at it at my rate?" asked Spink. "You haven't a leg to stand on, and I don't propose to take

advice from you again. You've disappointed me sadly! My luck is where it was, except in the matter of my officers, and it's notorious that I have no luck with them. We're out of the *Swan* without a life lost, we've got heaps of grub, plenty of blankets, and a fine comfortable iceberg under us. There's many this hour in the Western Ocean that might envy us, and don't you make any error about that. I come from Glo'ster, and my name is Captain Harry Sharpness Spink, and drunk or sober it's as good as havin' your life insured to sail with me. Oh, I'm all right, and I propose to plug the first man that growls, if he's as big as the side of a house."

None of them was in trim to take up the challenge, and Spink lighted his pipe.

"Three cheers for the captain," said the crew; and they cheered him heartily, for which he thanked them almost regally, though he somewhat spoilt the effect of it afterwards by telling them to go to hell out of that and pick a place to camp in at a little distance.

"So far as I can see in this fog there's plenty of room for everyone," said Spink, as the night grew dark. That was where he was wrong, for

they soon discovered, by falling into the water on the far side, that they were on no great ice island, but had picked a very small berg indeed. Spink consoled them by telling them that they wouldn't be on it long, and they could hardly help believing him as he seemed so certain of it.

"And after all," he said to Day and Ward, "the old *Swan* was insured for more than she was worth, and I shouldn't be surprised if the owners were pleased with the catastrophe."

He wrapped himself in blankets and lay down. In five minutes he was breathing like a child.

"I tell you," said the second mate, "the 'old man' is a wonder, for all we have to treat him like a kid. I say, Ward, let's be kind to him to-morrow and say Glo'ster is just as good as any other county."

"I don't mind," said Ward; "but if we do he'll take advantage of it."

"Oh, let him," said Day. "He's a fair scorcher, and if he gets too rowdy we can always put him down. On my soul I'm gettin' to like him. He's got the pluck of a bull-dog. Where's old Mac?"

They found Mac sitting in a puddle of melting ice-water, weeping about his family at Glasgow.

The second engineer, whose name was Calder, was trying to console his chief by saying it might have been worse.

"It canna be waur, man," said old Mac. "What can be waur than bein' wreckit, and on a wee sma' bit o' ice that's veesibly meltin' as I sit on it? The cauld is strikin' through to my very banes, and in the hurry I've had the sair misfortune to come away wi'out the medicine for my rheumatics. To-morrow I'll be i' a knot wi' 'em, and nothing for it but cauld water, which I couldna abide sin' I was a bairn. And all my work on the engines wasted. I'm a mournful man this hour."

He drank something out of a bottle. As he had left his medicine behind it could not have been that. It certainly did him no good, for he wept all the more after taking it, and throwing himself in Calder's arms he insisted that the second engineer was his mother, and begged her not to insist on his having a cold bath.

"He's a puir silly buddy," said Calder, "and I've no great opeenion of him as an engineer, though he's no' the fool he seems the noo."

And the night wore away while Mac wept and Spink slept the sleep of the righteous, and

Ward and Day smoked in silence. As for the crew, they lay huddled up together, and only woke to swear at the new kind of 'doss.' On the whole, everyone but the chief engineer was not unhappy, and even he, by reason of the attention he paid to the bottle which did not contain medicine, fell fast asleep and snored like a very appropriate fog-horn. The dawn broke very early, at about three, and it found most of the inhabitants of the berg still unconscious. In the night the fog had lifted, and the sea was almost as calm as a duck-pond. What wind there was now blew from the west, and was much warmer than it had been. Within a mile there were two or three other small bergs, but when Spink grunted and yawned and crawled out of his blankets there was nothing else in sight.

"Humph," said Spink, "this is a rummy go, and if I didn't come from Glo'ster I should be in a blue funk. I must keep up my spirits, and show 'em what my luck's like. I've been in worse fixes than this many a time, and after all, with a good seaworthy berg underfoot, and lashings of grub, I don't see why anyone should growl. If anyone does I'll knock his head off. Now, which of these jokers is the cook?"

He found the steward, and booted him gently in the ribs. At least he said it was gently, whatever the aggrieved steward thought of it.

"Now then, Cox," said the skipper, "turn out and find me the cook, — he's one of this pile of snorin' hogs, — and let's have some breakfast."

By the time the grub was ready, Ward and Day were 'on deck' and the sun was beginning to think of doing the same. The two mates looked round the horizon and saw nothing to comfort them. The only cheerful thing in sight was the skipper, and for very shame the more pessimistic Ward screwed up a smile.

"Not so bad, is it?" asked Spink.

"It might be worse, I own," replied the mate. "What course are you steerin', Spink?"

"Straight for Glo'ster," replied Spink cheerfully. "How did you chaps sleep?"

Ward said he hadn't slept at all, but Day averred that he had dreamt he had been locked in a refrigerator belonging to some cold-meat steamer from Australia. And just then the steward said that breakfast was ready. It consisted of cold tinned beef, iced biscuit, and melted berg. There were signs of a mutiny among the crew at once.

"Say, cook, where's the cawfy?" they asked, and they were only reduced to a proper sense of the situation by a few strong remarks from Captain Spink. The riot subsided before it really began, and all the 'slop-built, greedy sons of corby crows,' as Spink called them, sat down meekly and ate what they were given. And then the sun came up and warmed them, and they soon began to feel well and happy. But now the real trouble of the situation began to develop. The heat of the summer sun when it once got high enough to do some work began to melt the berg. It was rather higher in the middle than it was on the edges, and it was most amazingly slippery. The water ran off it in streams, and as it was barely big enough to start with, it looked as if they would shortly be crowded.

"I never thought of this," said Spink. "I tell you, Ward, she'll turn turtle before we know where we are. We must put all the stores in the boat, and have a man in her to keep her clear if the berg capsizes."

"Your luck ain't what you let on," said Ward gloomily; "the thing fair melts under us, and we'll have to swim."

" To thunder with your croaking," said Spink. " Oh, do dry up."

" I wish the berg would," said Ward, as he superintended the shipment of the stores. When it was done he put a cockney deck-hand into her and made him shove off.

" Blimy," said Lim'us, " I'm likely to be the on'y dry of the 'ole shoot."

The word ' shoot ' soon threatened to become highly appropriate, for about noon the berg was distinctly cranky. However fast it melted above, it was obviously melting much faster down below, for they had apparently struck a streak of comparatively warm water, and when ice does go it goes fast. The ' crowd ' got very uneasy, and Spink got very cross as he arranged them so as to trim his craft.

" Sit still, you swine," said Spink. " Do you want to capsize us? "

" But we're so cold be'ind, sittin' still, sir," said one bolder than the rest.

" I'll warm you if I have to come over and speak to you," said Spink, and he presently undertook to do it. The moment he rose to carry out his threat the iceberg wobbled in the most dreadful manner, and so encouraged the offender that he laughed.

"If you come to 'it me, captain, she'll go over," he said with a malicious grin.

"So she will," said Ward, laying hold of the skipper to prevent his moving. But Spink was not to be baulked. He spoke to another of the men sitting near the mutineer.

"Jackson, you come here while I go over there and dress Billings down."

"Don't you go, Jackson, for if you do I'll dress you down to a proper tune arterwards," said the insubordinate Billings, as he grabbed hold of Jackson, who looked at the skipper appealingly.

"What am I to do, sir?" he asked.

"You're to obey orders," said Spink.

"Don't you forgit I'll plug you if you do," said Billings.

Poor Jackson was obviously in serious difficulties, for Billings was the boss and bully of the fo'c'sle. He could even lick any of the firemen, and there were some very tough gentry among that gang.

"If I don't come over to you, sir, what will you do?" Jackson asked the skipper nervously.

"I'll come over to you, if we're in the drink

the next moment," replied Spink firmly. " Don't any of you Johnnies think you can best me. Are you coming or are you not? "

Jackson shook his shock head.

" This is very hard lines on a peaceable cove like me," said Jackson; " but if I am to catch toko, I'd much rather take it from Billings than from you, sir."

And as he spoke, he smote Billings very violently on the nose. Billings, who expected nothing less, let a horrid bellow out of him, and promptly slipped on the ice. He fell, and slid overboard with a howl, and the berg came near to capsizing then and there.

" Well done, Jackson," said Spink approvingly, as Billings disappeared in the sea, " very well done indeed." And then Billings rose to the surface.

" Can you swim, Billings? " asked Spink with an air of kindly curiosity. " Oh, yes, I see you can, so keep on doing it till you feel a little less mutinous."

It took Billings rather less than a minute to become obedient, for though the sea was warm enough to melt the berg it was by no means so warm as a swimming bath, and he

presently howled for mercy, and was dragged upon the ice once more.

It was lucky for Billings that the sun by now was really hot. He stripped off his clothes and squeezed them as dry as he could, while he threatened to kill Jackson as soon as he could. His threats were interrupted by the sound of a large crack, and presently there were obvious signs that the berg was about to capsize. Lim'us got quite excited as they discussed the situation, and came in close, till Ward ordered him to get farther away. As he rowed off reluctantly he encouraged them by yelling, "She's goin' over! May the Lord look sideways at me if she ain't."

"Oh, oh!" said poor old Mac, "I'm a puir meeserable sinner wi' a sore head and no medicine, and I'll be wet in a crack, and I'll die wi'out a wee drappie. Oh, oh, oh!"

And the berg stopped cracking but took on an ugly cant. A big lump of ice broke off it down below and came up to the surface with a leap.

"Steady, you swine," said Spink politely to his unhappy crew; and Ward asked him where his luck was. Whatever answer he was to get he never knew, for with a curious heave the

berg started on a roll, and with a suddenness which took them all with surprise she bucked them into the Atlantic, together with what materials they had for a raft. It was a lucky thing for at least half of them that there had been time to save such dunnage from the *Swan*, for half the crowd, including M'Pherson and Day, could not swim a stroke. Ward grabbed Day and helped him to a spar, and Spink did the same for old Mac. And in the meantime Lim'us made everyone furious by squealing with laughter in the boat. Billings threatened him with death when he got hold of him, and Spink had no mind or breath to rebuke the horrid and bloodthirsty language with which the late mutineer reinforced his threats.

"Oh, oh!" squealed old Mac when the skipper laid hold of him; "oh, oh, I'm drooned, I'm drooned! and I've the rheumatism bad in a' my joints."

And Spink said he was the howling and illegitimate descendant of three generations without any character whatever, as he dragged him to a floating oar alongside the capsized berg. Now it was not so high out of water, and there was far more space on it. For some time it would

be comparatively stable, and when Spink scrambled on it the first of anyone he congratulated himself on his never failing luck. He helped the rest on board, and the whole space was soon occupied by an unclad crowd wringing the Atlantic out of their clothes, and trying to get warm in the sun. It was quite astonishing how cheerful everyone was, with the single exception of that confirmed pessimist the chief engineer. At their end of the berg the men took to skylarking, and Billings actually forgave Jackson.

"You done what I'd ha' done myself," said Billings, "for I owns now I'd a'most as soon take on that big brute Ward as 'ave the skipper get about me. But when I give 'im that back-talk I was that icy be'ind that I was like froze Haustralian mutting, and as cross as if my old woman 'ad been relatin' what 'er mother thought of me. I furgives you, Jackson, I furgives you this once. But don't you hever 'it me on the smeller agin, or a penny peep-show won't be in it for the sight you'll be."

It was considered by the crowd that Billings by this act of nobility had shown himself a 'gent,' and Billings swaggered greatly on the strength of it.

The crew, of course, did not think. They were not paid to do so. All that was the officers' business. It hardly occurred to them that the ice on which they stood wasn't likely to last for ever. In the warmth of the sun they forgot the discomforts of the past night, and did not think of the night to come. But Ward did, and he was still very gloomy on the situation.

"Just as she spilt us," said Ward, "I was askin' you your opinion of your luck. What do you think of it now? Perhaps you'll use that regal authority of a skipper to get us out of the hole you've got us in."

If ever any skipper had the right to be justly indignant, Spink thought he was that man.

"The hole I got you in! I like that, oh, I do like that. Who was it, I ask, that pestered me to go half speed, and almost wept till I said 'Have your own way, you cross-eyed swine'?"

"You never addressed them words to me," said Ward truculently, "or I'd have given you what for, and well you know it."

Spink shook his head.

"I ain't sayin' that I used them very words," he urged, "all I mean is that that was what I meant when I let you have your own silly

way, which has landed me and Day, to say
nothin' of the rest, on a penn'orth of ice in
mid-Atlantic, more or less."

"Don't bring me into the argument," said
Day. "You're a cunning sort of a chap, Spink,
but you needn't try to raise ructions between
me and Ward, for I won't have it. I know you,
Spink."

"I'm a very unfortunate man," said poor
Spink, "for at this very moment I'd give three
months' pay to be able to lick the pair of you.
But, after what the Chief Foreign Officer
of my authority that I should be more
treated by my officers, even if I have an
disposition which compels me to lick
but that ain't any reason for makin' me
or at anyrate more miserable than
position of not bein' able to."

"Oh, all right," said Day, "go ahead an
Nobody's stoppin' you, is he? Let hi
Ward. He's all right; and as for fightin
I could teach him to be too much f
in a month with the boxin' gloves."

"I wish you would," said Spink. "Oh, D
no notion how I should enjoy past

He fell into contemplation of such a joy, and did not speak till Ward clapped him on the back and said he was a very good sort after all.

"And if it's any use to you, I own that my havin' gone half speed that time may have put us here. But sayin' so much don't mean that I now approve of buttin' headlong into an ice-pack at twenty knots an hour. But to go back to what I was sayin' before you started this row, where's your luck, Spink? To my mind it don't look so healthy a breed of luck as you let on, and it's my notion that old Mac is of my opinion, to judge by the sad expression of his countenance."

"To blazes with the old fool!" said Spink. "Who cares what he thinks? My luck is where it was, and I reckon to get out of this with flyin' colours, and never a man short, and nothin' against the certificates of any of us. I've noticed all my life that I seem to be under the especial care of Providence, and I don't believe Providence will go back on me after plantin' me here all safe and sound on an iceberg. Day, rake up that cook, and give the cockney in the boat a hail. We'll have some grub. I've a twist on me like a machine-made hawser."

They went to dinner, and the sun did something of the same sort. At anyrate it went out of sight, and a thick fog came down on the castaways.

"We 'opes no bloomin' packet 'll come and run us pore blighters down," said the men as they fell to work on the grub, "for accordin' to the 'old man,' who is the cheerfulest bloke in difficulties we ever struck, we're right in the track of the ole shoot of 'em, and may be picked up or scooted into the sea again any minute."

As a matter of fact, they were then on the southern tail of the Bank, for when the *Swan* bunted her nose into the berg, she was pretty well at the locality on the Grand Bank where the usual 'lane' to New York is left for the lane to Halifax. The very watch before the collision they had verified their position by flying the 'blue pigeon,' as seamen call the deep-sea lead, and ever since then they had been floating in the Labrador current to the south and east. To locate them exactly, they were just about where the Great Circle Track of steamers from the English Channel to the Gulf of Mexico crosses the tail of the Bank. There was every chance of something coming

along there, even if it was getting late enough in the season for the big liners to take the route to the south'ard for fear of the very ice which had brought them to grief.

"Oh, yes," said the crowd, when they were full up with food, "we're all right."

Nevertheless the fog did not cheer them up to any great extent, and when it showed signs of lasting all day they grew less happy.

"A hundred vessels might pass us in this," said Ward, who for all his bigness had much less endurance than the skipper, and was now hardly more cheerful than old Mac. "I wish I was out of it."

"Oh, wish again," retorted Spink contemptuously. "Do you know, Ward, that you make me tired? What do you get by howlin' and growlin'? I know this is goin' to come out all right, and I won't be discouraged by any silly jaw of a man that ought to know better. Shut up."

And to Day's surprise Ward shut up. At that very moment there came a bellow from Billings, who had relieved Lim'us in the boat.

"Berg, ahoy!" roared Billings.

"Hallo!" replied the skipper. "What's the matter now?"

"I 'ears a steamer, so help me Dick!" bellowed Billings joyfully. "I 'ears 'er plain. Don't none of you blokes 'ear 'er too?"

There was such a buzz among the crowd that it would have been hard to hear a fog-horn, and it was not until Spink had hit three, kicked half a dozen, and used at least ten pounds' worth of bad language, according to 19 Geo. II. cap. 21, that anything like silence was restored. Then it was obvious that Billings had made no mistake. The sea was fairly calm, the breeze from the west was light, and any sound carried long and far.

"She's coming from the westward," said Spink, as he consulted a toy compass on his watch-chain.

"No," said Day, "she's bound west, or I'm a Dutchman."

"Then you come from Amsterdam for a certainty," said the 'old man' crossly. "Now, men, shout all together when I say three. One, two, three."

And just as the men yelled there was a *hoot-too-oot* from the steamship, which for a moment made them believe she had heard them. But Spink knew better, and when there was another hoot he grabbed Day by the arm.

"By Jemima," said Spink, "we're both right, Day. There are two of 'em; that second squeal never came out of the same whistle that the first one did!"

Now the nature of fog is something that no fellow can understand. Seamen must not think they are a long way off if they hear a sound faintly, or even if they do not hear it at all. That's bad enough, but there is worse behind. They are not to reckon they are near because they hear it plainly, or that it isn't to be heard farther away at some other spot if they cease to hear it at all. And, furthermore, any notion that a sound comes from any particular direction is the biggest trap of the lot. Now the uninitiated can understand that they do not understand, and that seamen are in the same awkward fix whenever a fog comes down to cheer them on their weary way. The two steamers coming out of nothingness and butting into it were commanded by men who trusted to the evidence of their senses, as if they were police magistrates trusting to policemen. They hooted and bellowed in the most wonderful manner, and said with one short blast that they were directing their course to starboard. And as

neither knew where the other was, or where he was himself, they directed their courses with the most marvellous precision to the exact spot on the tail of the Grand Bank in the Western Ocean where they could collide. And they did so with a most horrid grinding crash, and with one long, last, fearful and hopeless wail on their steam-whistles.

"Holy sailor," said the iceberg's crew, "this time they've been and gone and done it!"

Ward asked Spink sickly if he had any remarks to make about his luck. Spinks hadn't, but he had some remarks to make about Ward, which in other circumstances would have led to war. While he was relieving his overcharged mind there was a horrid uproar coming out of the fog, for both the steamships were blowing off steam, and everyone on board of them appeared to be running the entire show at the top of his voice. And just as it was all at its extreme point of interest the fog played one of its commonest tricks, and with an anacoustic wall shut off the whole dreadful play in one single moment.

The castaways turned to each other in alarm, and Billings, who had nearly lost himself in the fog, rowed in close.

"I think they've both foundered," said Billings, and it certainly looked as if he were right, in spite of what Spink said to him.

"I believe the josser is right," said Day; and old Mac wept and said he was sure of it, and that he had the rheumatics badly, and that he was very cold. And to add to Spink's joy, once more Ward asked if he still thought he was under the especial protection of Providence. Then for the first time Spink lost his temper and went for Ward, and by dint of taking him by surprise served him as Jackson had served Billings.

"Take that, you swab," said the enraged skipper. "I'll teach you to be so discouraging and so blasphemous as to cast a slur on Providence."

And when Ward climbed upon the ice again all he said was —

"All right, Spink, you wait till we're on board that beastly packet you and Providence have up your sleeves."

And everyone sat down and smoked, and said how grieved they were for the poor unfortunate beggars who had been drowned through having no nice comfortable iceberg to take refuge on.

Then they had their supper and went to sleep, leaving all their cares in the faithful hands of poor Spink.

"Ah," he sighed, "my unfortunate disposition cuts me off from all real sympathy. I've no one to confide in at sea or ashore, and as if bein' a ship-master wasn't solitary enough I must plug Ward and make him hostile. I wish I'd been brought up better and licked more before I got into this fatal habit of fighting."

He couldn't go to sleep, and took to walking as far as the narrow limits at his disposal would allow him. When he found that he was in for a restless night he told the man on the lookout that he could turn in. Jackson, who happened to be the look-out, lingered a little before he did as he was told.

"Do you think, sir," he asked with some trepidation at his daring to speak to the skipper, "do you think, sir, that we shall ever get out o' this?"

"Of course we shall," said Spink. "What do you suppose I'm here for? Go to sleep, Jackson, and mind your own business. You'll be all right."

And Jackson, who was a simple-minded sea-

man of the real old sort, fell asleep feeling that the 'old man' was to be relied on even on an iceberg in the Western Ocean and in a fog as thick as number one canvas.

For by now the fog was thick and no mistake. As Spink walked the ice, and squelched with his sea-boots in the melted puddles, he could hardly see his hand before his face, and more than once he nearly walked overboard. At midnight it was even thicker, and he was obliged to give up walking and come to an anchor on a tin of corned beef, and though he was on watch it has to be owned that he dozed for a few minutes, just as Lim'us did in the boat which lay a little way off the berg. When Spink woke he found it just about as dark as their prospects. When his eyes cleared, he sighed and looked about him, with a mind which took some of its tone from the fog and from the dull dead hour of two o'clock in the morning.

"I wonder if my luck is out," he sighed, and he stared solidly into the solidest darkness. It was certainly monstrously dark in one direction. He rubbed his eyes and grunted. Then he lighted a match and looked at his little compass. His mind went back to the lady in Bristol who had given it to him.

"She was a very pretty piece," said Spink thoughtfully. "But I'm damned if I can see why it should be darkest towards the east."

He rose up and peered into the fog. Again he rubbed his eyes, and then stood staring.

"Perhaps another berg," he said, "but——"

He stood as still as if his figure had been turned into stone, and presently he looked to the sleeping crowd, who were all as solid with sleep as if they were dead, and nodded in the strangest way.

"Oh, oh, if it is; if it only isn't a horrid delusion," he murmured. He turned to the darkness again and shook his fist at it and the fog. At that very moment the fog rolled up like a curtain. Right in front of Spink, and not farther than a man could chuck a biscuit, there lay the strange and almost monstrous apparition of a silent, lightless, and derelict steamer!

"What did I say to Ward about Providence?" asked Spink of the whole Atlantic Ocean. "Ward cast a nasty and uncalled-for slur on its ways when he said what he did. But now I've got the bulge on him, and no fatal error about it."

He rubbed his hands together and smiled very happily.

"There'll be fine pickings in this and no mistake," he murmured. "Oh, this'll be something like salvage. And I'll lay dollars to cents that I can tell how it happened. Ah, here comes the fog again!"

The fog dropped down in a thin veil, till the dim and ghostly derelict looked still less substantial than it had done. Then it heaved and rolled in, and the deserted packet could be seen no more. Spink sighed but was happy.

"I'll give Ward the biggest surprise he ever had in his life," he said, as he turned to the boat in which young Lim'us was doing a very solid caulk. Spink kicked some ice into small lumps, and at the third attempt he hit the sleeper on the side of his head. Lim'us woke with a start, and he heard the captain's voice just in time to prevent him threatening to eviscerate the swab who was slinging things at him.

"Hold your infernal jaw," said Spink in a savage whisper, "and pull in here quiet, or I'll murder you."

Lim'us obeyed instantly, though he had doubts as to whether it was wise to come within arm's length of the skipper after having been caught asleep.

"I warn't asleep, sir; stri'my blind if I was," he began as he came up to the berg.

"Dry up and say nothin'," said Spink. "If you wake anyone I'll see you don't sleep again for a week. Hand up some of that truck and get the stern sheets clear, I want to get in myself."

There was more than a chance of not finding the derelict and of losing the iceberg, and Spink knew it. Just as he was about to chance it he remembered that he had a couple of balls of strong twine in the bag into which he had dumped all his belongings, including the precious ship's papers, when he left the *Swan*. As he recalled this lucky fact a heavenly smile overspread his handsome features.

"It's a splendid notion," said Spink. "I feel as proud of it as a dog with two tails! I wish those chaps at the Foreign Office were here now; they would enjoy it better than a play."

He stepped to his bag as lightly as a Polar bear after a sleeping seal, and when he found the twine he tied the end of it to Ward's leg.

"Ward at one end and Providence at the other," said Spink, with a grin. "Oh, won't he be surprised!"

And the skipper went back to the boat, paying out the twine as he went. He was chuckling in the merriest way, and poor Lim'us, who was cold, and very sick of the whole affair, thought that the strain had been too much for him.

" 'E's balmy on the crumpet, that's what's the matter wiv 'im," said Lim'us as he obeyed orders reluctantly, and pulled into the solid fog with a mad and grinning skipper, who would probably scupper him as soon as they were out of earshot of the crew.

" I wish I was in Lim'us," said he. " I'd give all my wyges to see Commercial Rowd again."

And still Spink chuckled and paid out the twine, until suddenly the boat ran into a still deeper darkness.

" Easy boy," said the skipper, with a strange note of exultation in his voice. " Easy, we're there now."

As he spoke the boat ground up against the side of the derelict, and Lim'us turned about on the thwart and touched the iron plates with his hand.

" If you let a yell out of you," said the captain, " I'll cut your throat from ear to ear."

But indeed Lim'us was incapable of yelling.

All he could do was to gasp, and he did that as effectively as if he was a bonito with the grains in him. And the boat drifted towards the vessel's bows, while Spink looked for the easiest way on board.

"They ran like rats," said Spink. "Oh, I know the way they ran. They got on board the other boat, and think this one is now surprisin' the codfish."

They reached the bows at last, and came round on the port side, and there Spink found what he looked for. The vessel had been cut down to within six inches of the water's edge about forty feet aft from the bow.

"Just as I laid it out in my mind," said Spink. "Catch hold you, while I get on board."

He dropped about ten fathoms of the twine into the water, and with the rest of the ball in his pocket he scrambled up the horrid gash in the derelict's side and got on deck. He walked for'ard and got the twine clear out on the starboard side, pointing for the unconscious mate. Then he made it fast and took a look at his new command. In spite of the fog it was not difficult to see that she was a fine new boat of about two thousand tons, built and fitted, as was

pretty obvious from her derricks, for a fast freight boat. It was equally obvious that the whole crew had evacuated her in a panic, for Spink found the skipper's berth with the bedclothes on the floor, along with a sad and derelict pair of trousers. The 'old man' had evidently been in his bunk instead of being on the bridge, and, so far as Spink could see, he had stayed to grab nothing but the ship's papers, without which there can be no maritime salvation.

"This will be a very valuable salvage job," said Spink, as he licked his lips after taking a pull at a bottle of whiskey which he found only too handy to the lips of the former skipper. "There's money in this, oh, lots of it. And now I'll show Ward where my luck comes in. And I'll have old Mac and Calder patch up that rent in her before it comes on to blow again."

He put the bottle in his pocket and went for'ard, feeling a deal more proud than if he owned a fleet. For the deserted steamer, the name of which was the *Winchelsea* of Liverpool, was a direct proof that his luck was still what it had been. He found the end of the twine, and hauled in the slack very cautiously.

"I wish I could see his face," said Spink, as he gave the twine a yank which made Ward sit up suddenly and wonder what had happened to him.

"Oh, oh, oh!" said Ward. The ice was nearer than it had been, and what he said was quite audible on board the *Winchelsea*.

"Eh, what?" said Ward. And then Spink gave the line another yank which almost started Ward on an ice run for the water. But this time he found out what was the matter, and laid hold of the twine.

"Who the devil's pulling my leg?" he roared in such stentorian tones that the whole crowd woke up instantly.

"I am," said Spink. "And I'll thank you to pay attention, and not lie there snoring while I do all the work."

"Where are you?" asked Ward. "I can't see you."

"Where d'ye think I am?" asked Spink. "While you were asleep I went out and looked for a new job and found it."

As he spoke there were sudden signs of dawn, and once more the curtain of the mist rolled away, and the late crew of the *Swan* saw a big

steamer within fifty feet of them, with the late skipper of the *Swan* leaning over her side smoking his morning pipe.

"Jerusalem!" said the crew, and they shook their heads with amazement, while Ward scratched his. Day whistled, old Mac burst into joyful tears, and Billings used some awful language to show his gratitude. And Spink said —

"When you have washed and shaved and put on clean collars, I should be much obliged by your coming on board and doing enough work to melt the hoar-frost that's on you. Limehouse, scull over to the berg, and look quick about it."

In ten minutes they all found themselves on board, and Mac and Calder set to work before breakfast to patch her up. The engines and furnaces were still warm, and it took little time to get up steam. But Ward took some to get up his. As he said, it was a fair knock-out, and it seemed like some black magic on the part of the skipper, who walked the bridge after breakfast as if he owned the whole North Atlantic.

"She was bound for England, and we'll go home," said Spink. "And as soon as may be

we'll find out what's in her. This is my first salvage, and it's goin' to be a good one."

"You're a wonder," said Ward.

"Didn't I always say so?" replied Spink modestly. "And now I hope that you and Day will behave yourselves, and not trade on any weaknesses that I may have, for I won't put up with it if you do."

"How do you propose to stop it?" asked Day. "You can't plug me or Ward any better now than you could before. Why don't you behave? Then there would be no trouble. I'm fair sick of hearin' about your unfortunate disposition."

"So am I," said Ward.

Spink shook his head with disgust.

"And this kind of talk after what I've done," he said. "I wish you would read old Kelly's little book on the Mate and His Duties, Ward. It would teach you how to behave."

"I had it in the *Swan*," said Ward, "but though it had a lot in it about land-saints and sea-devils, there was nothin' in it that fitted a man like you."

"Perhaps not," said Spink thoughtfully. "I own I'm rare, I'm very rare."

The fog cleared right off, and the sun shone and the calm sea sparkled. In such circumstances everyone ought to have been happy, but Spink said he wasn't.

"I wish I wasn't so rare," said Spink.

IV

THE REMARKABLE CONVERSION OF THE REV. THOMAS RUDDLE

THE passengers on board the s.s. *Nantucket*, bound from New York to Table Bay, were of a kind to make any old-fashioned seaman shake his head and talk dismally of Davy Jones. They were nearly all ministers and missionaries, and it is well known to all who follow the sea that gentlemen of that kind are unlucky to have on board. For Davy Jones is the very devil, and if he gets a chance to drown a minister he does it at once, so that he may do no more good. There can be no mistake about this, for every sailorman of great experience will endorse the theory with strange oaths. What all sailors say must be true, for they know their business.

One of these missionaries was the Reverend Mr. Ruddle, and he was the chief of all the others, who were going to South Africa to do it

good. There were six of them all told. Thomas Ruddle had his wife with him, for he could not exist without her; and she, for her part, thought him a marvellous man and a darling. He had a beautiful smile, and a big black beard, and a voice like the bellow of an amiable bull. But Mrs. Ruddle was blue-eyed, with the complexion of a Californian peach and a voice like a flute. She would have followed him to Davy Jones' locker itself if he had asked her, and though he did not think of doing anything so unorthodox, they were not far from having to go there without the consent of anyone. For when the *Nantucket* was within two hundred miles of Capetown it came on to blow from the south-east as if the very devil was at the bellows, and after the old packet had proved that she hadn't sufficient power to make headway against the gale, she promptly cracked her shaft, and went drifting away to loo'ard like a Dutch schuyt on a lee tide.

"It is a very sad misfortune, and I do not know now when we shall be in Africa," said Tom Ruddle. "I regret to say, my dear, that the captain is on the main-deck using very bad language to the chief engineer, who is replying

to him in a way that I cannot approve. Indeed, I think he swears worse than Captain Stokes, if it is possible, which I doubt."

The other gentlemen in black mostly kept to their cabins, but Ruddle went about in the most astonishing way. If the *Nantucket* stood on her head Ruddle never lost his feet, and when she stood on her tail he was quite at his ease. When she indulged in a wild compound wallow in those delightful cross pyramidal seas which are the peculiar attribute of the South Atlantic in the neighbourhood of the Cape, all that Tom Ruddle said was 'Dear me.' He even said it when Captain Stokes did a flying scoot on the main-deck, and brought up against the rail with a crash that almost unshipped his teeth. What Stokes said was not 'Dear me.' And the old *Nantucket* went drifting west-nor'-west on the branch of the current, coming round the Cape, which runs far to the north of Tristan d'Acunha, as if she had put Africa out of her mind. Down below the engineers were trying very hard to fake up something to brace round the shaft, so that they could at least turn the engines ahead when the weather let up a little. It seemed a hopeless job, and to none so hopeless as to

the engine-room crowd. And just as perseverance with the impossible seemed about to be rewarded, the *Nantucket* gave a wallow in an awful sea, and quietly dropped her propeller as a scared lizard drops its tail. Then very naturally the wind took off, and the sea went down and smoothed itself out, and looked quite pretty to those who had been watching the grey waste in despair.

"We're done," said the skipper. For the idea of sailing her into Table Bay was as feasible as sailing her to the moon. The wind, although it had fallen light, was still in the east, and it threatened to stay so till it blew another gale, after the fashion of Cape weather, where fifty per cent. of all winds that blow are gales.

"It is exceedingly unfortunate," said Ruddle.

"What will happen to us?" asked his fellows in deep melancholy.

"Something must," said their brave leader, and sure enough it did. A sailing ship hove in sight to loo'ard. The skipper, as soon as he heard of the stranger, made up his mind what to do. He hoisted the signal 'In distress — want assistance,' and presently the sailing ship came up under her lee within hailing distance, and backed her main-topsail.

"Are you bound for Table Bay?" asked Captain Stokes, and the obliging stranger said he was. In ten minutes it was all arranged, and the *Nantucket's* passengers were being transhipped to the *Ocean Wave* of a thousand tons register, belonging to London. Stokes went on board with the last boat, and shook hands with the master of the *Ocean Wave.*

"When you get in send a tug out to find us," said Stokes; "it's goin' to blow heavy in a while."

"I'll do it," said Captain Gray; "but are you sure that you won't come along?"

"I'd go under first," said Stokes; "I'll stick by her till I'm as old as the Flying Dutchman, and my beard is down to my knees."

It was very rash to say such things in the very cruising ground of Vanderdecken, and some of the crew of the *Wave* that heard it shivered. But Stokes was a hard case, and believed in nothing. He said good-bye to his passengers and went on board the *Nantucket.* The *Ocean Wave* boarded her maintack and stood on her course with her new crowd of passengers, who were very much delighted to be on board something that did not go to leeward like a butter-cask.

"How strange to be on board a sailing ship," said Ruddle, as he stood on the poop with the skipper, who was a genial old chap with a white beard, and a figure as square as a four-hundred gallon tank.

"Why strange, Mr. Ruddle?" asked Captain Gray. "Barring your rig-out you look a deal more like a seaman than a parson, at least you do to my eye."

"Your eye is right, captain," said Ruddle with a sigh. "But it is a very remarkable thing that though I have been a sailor I know nothing about the sea that I have not picked up on board the unlucky steamer we have just left."

"That's a very strange thing to say, sir," said the skipper, as he eyed Ruddle from head to foot. "May I ask how you make that out? Once a seaman always a seaman, I should say. I can't imagine my forgetting anything. I never could."

"It's a very strange story," said Ruddle; "and if there wasn't evidence for it I shouldn't believe it myself. But in my pocket-book below I have my old discharges as mate, and yet at the present moment there is no one on board

who knows less about the sea than I do, though I hold a master's certificate."

"Spin us the yarn," said the skipper, and Ruddle told him the strange tale.

"I am informed," said the minister, "that I was, at the time I am about to mention, mate in a ship belonging to Dundee. I say I am told, because I have not the least recollection of it. To put it shortly, I may tell you that I had an accident, and when I became sensible again I was in hospital in Liverpool."

"But what was your accident?" asked Captain Gray.

"Something that I am told you call a shear-pole came down from aloft and struck me on the head, and I knew no more," said Ruddle, who was evidently a very poor hand at a yarn.

"Well, well, go on," said the skipper. "What happened then?"

"How do I know?" asked Ruddle in his turn. "I was knocked silly while the crew were taking in sail in a very great storm to the south of Ireland, and they say I was very angry with the poor fellows up aloft and was using dreadful language to them. I was struck down, and when I came to myself I was not myself at all but

another, — if I do not sadly confuse you by putting it that way, — and I had forgotten all that had happened since I went to sea, and I did not want to go again. I became a minister instead and a missionary."

"Well, I'm jiggered," said Gray, "but that's a corker of a yarn. Were you married when you were a seaman?"

"No," replied Ruddle; "I met my wife soon after I became my second and present self, and my remarkable story so interested her that we got married. It is interesting, isn't it?"

"And do you mean to say that you remember nothing whatever of the sea? Could you go aloft, for instance?"

Mr. Ruddle looked up aloft and shivered.

"Oh, I couldn't," he said. "The very look of the complicated apparatus with which I must have been once only too familiar fills me with peculiar horror."

"Well, I'm damned," said Gray. "What's the opposite point of the compass to sou'-east-by-sou'-half sou'-southerly?"

"I give it up. Tell me," said the minister simply.

Gray shook his head.

"You surprise me, sir. Can you tell when there is a mighty strong likelihoods of bad weather comin' along?"

"I'm not at all bad at guessing when it's likely to rain," said the former mate modestly. "I'm never caught in a shower without my umbrella."

And Gray shook his head again, and confided to the sea and air that Ruddle was a red wonder.

"If you don't know more about weather than that, you are going to have a fine chance to learn, Mr. Ruddle," said the skipper. "I smell a howling gale or I'm a double-distilled Dutchman. If it don't come out of nor'-east like a rampin', ragin', snortin' devil, call me no sailor, but the reddest kind of sojer."

There were many signs of it, and the fall of the glass was only one. The swell that had been coming in from the south-east now began to come more from the north, and the whole of the horizon was in a kind of smoke. The wind, which had fallen so light, now began to puff a little, and though it was no more than a breeze that any man's t'gallan's'ls could look at comfortably, there were odd sighs in the wind,

sighs which had a rising tendency to become wails. Before long they would be wailings and no mistake, for these sounds are the real voice of a hurricane, and foretell it. The skipper looked up to windward and spoke to his mate.

"Mr. Dixon, I think we had better snug her down a bit before it gets dark, so clew up the t'gallan's'ls, and then we'll take the mainsail off her. And after that you can reef the foresail. While the breeze holds in the nor'-east we'll make all we can. But I reckon we'll be hove to by the morning."

There wasn't much doubt of that to those who knew something of Cape weather. The Cape pigeons as they wheeled and whistled about the *Ocean Wave* said 'clew up and clew down.' At anyrate, the crew for'ard said so as they turned out to shorten sail. Mr. Ruddle went below to encourage his companions and his wife. By the time it was as dark as the bottom of a tar-barrel they wanted encouragement, for the *Wave* began to pitch in a manner that the *Nantucket* had not accustomed them to, and as the wind increased the song of the gale in the rigging got on their nerves sadly.

"What do you think of it, Brother Ruddle?"

asked his friend Chadwick, a little butter-tub of a man with the courage of a lion among the heathen or the denizens of a New York slum, but without as much spirit when the wind blew as would enable a school-girl to face a cow in a lane. "What does Brother Ruddle think of it?"

Ruddle said that he did not think much of it, for he thought the skipper was not frightened.

"Although the sea threatens to rage, my friends," said the chief, "he shows no signs of unseemly terror, but with calm confidence bids his brave crew haste up aloft and reduce the mighty spread of canvas. They are even now engaged in the task. Hear with what strange music, which somehow begins to have a familiar ring in my ears, they encourage each other in their arduous duties. Oh, my friends, we little think when we are safe in the heart of Africa, or in the back parts of the Bowery, how seamen encounter dangers on our behalf."

"Ah, and you were a sailor once, Tom," said his wife.

"I do not praise myself, dear, in praising them, for now I dare not face those dangers with which at one time I must have been familiar. It is wonderful, all life is wonderful. If I had

not been smitten upon the head by a shearpole, whatever a shearpole may be, I might never have known any of you, my dear friends; and I might never have married you, my dear. Ah, it is a wonderful world, and they are making a very remarkable noise upstairs."

They certainly were making a noise, and so was the wind, and Mr. Dixon was saying very unorthodox things, and so was Smith the second mate. And every now and again the skipper could be heard in exhortation, so that Susan Ruddle snugged up alongside her husband, and said that she was glad he was not a seaman, though that she was sure that if he were one now he would never employ such language. Ruddle comforted her, and said it would fill him with horror to know that he had ever used any of that kind of talk. He felt sure in his mind that the report of his having ever done so must have been a malicious invention of some enemy. Since he had borne up for the Church he had been, as all men knew, of a scrupulousness which was extra Puritanical even for a minister. He never said 'damn' unless he had to in the course of his duty.

Presently the *Ocean Wave* began to behave

herself a little better under shortened canvas, and the old skipper came into the cabin with his face shining with spray, and a good-natured grin on him which would have encouraged the biggest coward at sea in a cyclone. Little Mrs. Ruddle cheered up on sight of him, and so did all but the Reverend Mr. Blithers, who was in a state of terror that was sheer lunacy.

"Is it a great storm? Are we going down?" asked Blithers. He was so far encouraged that he could speak.

"Bless my heart," replied the skipper, "what are you thinking of, in a nice breeze like this, and in a sailin' ship too? If you was in an old smokestack like the one I took you gents out of you might howl, but here you are in a fine tight ship, the real genuine article, and are a deal safer than if you was ashore."

"Oh, do you say so?" asked Blithers. "Oh, is it possible that you can say so with the wind howling like this?"

And indeed the gale began to pipe as if it meant business.

"Hold your tongue, Blithers," said Ruddle; "be a man and a missionary, and do not howl."

Blithers said his brother was unkind, and

ought to be more gentle with a weak vessel. And at that the skipper put in his oar, and suggested that so weak a vessel should not carry sail but retire to his cabin. At this Ruddle laughed jovially, and Blithers said he was hard and cruel, and devoid of all real religious feelings.

"Don't be a fool, my dear man," said Ruddle, "but go to bed. It is perhaps natural to be upset by the strange uproar, and the noise of the wind, and the trampling of the men on deck, but that is no reason why you should say I am not religious. If I were not I should be angry with you and say regrettable things, such as I am informed, on very good authority, that I said when I was a seaman."

"I don't believe you ever were one," said the sad and angry Blithers. "And if you were, it is a pity you did not stay one, for you are a very unkind man, and not good to me in my sad state of mind."

It took five missionaries to get Blithers into bed, but he went at last, and when he was gone Ruddle beamed on the rest, and said —

"Our poor brother is sadly upset by the weather. It is difficult to understand how he can be such a coward on the water when he is

a real hero on the dry land, and has an especial gift of management with backsliding cannibals. But anything can be believed when you remember that I was once in the position of Mr. Dixon, whose voice I now hear saying something about the lee-braces, and knew all about everything on board a ship. And now, my friends, all things here are mystery to me, and I do not know what the lee-braces are, and cannot distinguish with accuracy between a binnacle and a bull-whanger, if indeed there is such a thing as I was told by one of the seamen on the *Nantucket*. Ah, hold tight, dear, she is rocking to and fro with ever increasing velocity. I fear that Blithers will never forget this night."

And they all had supper. The 'old man' sat it out with them, and put on his oilskins again and went on the poop. There was no mistake about it now. The *Ocean Wave* was in for a Cape stinger, and Gray, who was of the old-fashioned, bull-headed sort, rammed her along on the very path the cyclonic disturbance was taking. If he had been thoroughly acquainted with the nature of all cyclones wherever they are bred, he would have turned tail to the blast, and have run into fairer weather

towards the south; or, as the *Wave* was in the southern semi-circle of the storm, he might have hove her to on the coming up or starboard tack. Instead of that he hung on all through the night. When the dawn came it was a fair howler and no mistake. Mr. Blithers and not a few of the others stayed in their bunks. It was blowing hard enough to make almost anyone ill, and the sea was very high. But Thomas Ruddle and his wife and Chadwick turned out to breakfast. If Ruddle trusted to Providence, Susan Ruddle trusted to him, and hardly thought it possible that any disaster could happen to her while he was to the fore. Mr. Chadwick was brave enough to hide his terror, though he was in a horrid funk. They hung on to the tables and ate some breakfast as best they could, and after eating, Ruddle and Mrs. Ruddle and Chadwick ventured on deck, in time to see the reefed foresail taken off her. Just as they got the weather clew-garnet chock up, the gale came screaming across the waste of grey sea to such a tune that the skipper altered his mind there and then.

"Hold on with the lee gear of the foresail, Mr. Dixon," he bellowed, and then he signed to the mate to come aft.

"We'll wear her now and heave her to on the starboard tack," said the 'old man.' "This is going to be a fair perisher."

As Dixon had been throwing out hints all night that he ought to do that or run, he was glad to hear it. They waited for a smooth, and put the helm up.

"Square the after yards!" roared the skipper; and they squared away, keeping the sails lifting.

"Isn't it wonderful?" said Ruddle. "I do wish I understood it. I wonder what they are doing it for?"

"Square the foreyard!" yelled the captain; and they did so, and got the staysail sheet over, and by proper management she came up on the other tack with her nose pointing N.N.E. They hauled up what was now the weather clew of the foresail, and the second mate and the men jumped aloft and furled it.

"Oh, dear," said Mr. Ruddle, "how dreadful to see them up there! I can't believe that I ever did it, Chadwick."

But the *Wave* was carrying her topsails, and though they were reefed she was scooting with her lee-rail awash. As soon as the foresail was

stowed, both topsail halliards were let go and the sails partly smothered by the spilling lines. When they were furled, the lower foretopsail was clewed up, and Ruddle, who got much excited, went down on the main-deck in spite of the seas which came over right for'ard by the galley. Mrs. Ruddle said, 'Oh, don't,' but Ruddle said, 'My dear, it is so interesting, and I must.' And there he was staring up at the crowd on the topsail-yard who were fighting the bellying canvas like heroes.

"Bless my soul, how very remarkable, and even terrible," said Ruddle. "How very extraordinary. I wonder if I ever did that. I'll ask Mr. Dixon if the manœuvre is often performed."

He fell upon the busy and very cross mate with this inquiry, and though Dixon had heard the tale about him he did not credit it, and put it down to some hallucination.

"Do I do it often? Do what often?" asked Dixon scornfully.

"Why, tie those sails up like that when it blows so hard?" asked Ruddle innocently. "Why don't you tie them up when it is fine? It would be much easier I should think."

"Oh, go home and die," said the mate savagely.

"That's very rude," said Ruddle, "and I don't like it."

"If you don't like it you can lump it," said the mate. "Haven't you more sense than to come worrying here in a gale of wind?"

"Is it a real gale?" asked Ruddle. "A very hard one?"

It certainly looked like one, for every squall came harder and harder, so that the topsail when it was once smothered was blown out of the men's grip, and was all abroad and belly-ing once more.

"Damn your eyes, hold on to it or you'll lose the sail after all!" yelled Dixon. But no one heard him on the yard, they were at grips with the canvas again, and the second mate and the bo'son at the bunt were doing all the cursing that was necessary for a task like that.

"They seem to be working very courageously, and I think it wrong of you to swear at them," said Ruddle severely; and then Dixon turned on him as if he were going to hit him. At that moment a fresh squall struck the *Wave* and almost laid her on her beam ends, though she was practically hove to under the lower main-topsail.

"I never swear," said Ruddle, as the mate lifted his fist. Then the squall shrieked, and as the *Wave* laid over to it both Ruddle and the mate lost their footing, and slid between the fo'castle and the fore part of the deck-house as if they were on an ice toboggan run. The mate said some awful things, and Ruddle gasped, 'You shouldn't, oh, you really shouldn't.' And then they fetched up against the lee-rail with a thump that caused a common accident and wrought a very uncommon miracle. Mr. Dixon snapped his arm like a carrot, and let a yell out of him that reached the crowd on the yard.

"By crimes!" said the men up aloft, "when old Dickie squeals like that he means comin' aloft himself to talk to hus like a father. Now then, boys, grab again and 'old her!"

As they tackled the topsail for the third time the cook came out of the lee door of the galley and picked the mate out of the swamped scuppers.

"Easy, easy, you swab," said Dixon. "My arm's broke."

With the cook's help he got aft, and when he did he promptly sat down in the cabin and fainted right off with the pain. And Ruddle

still wallowed in the scuppers, for he had hit the rail with his head and given it a most tremendous and effectual thump. After a minute or two he stirred and spat out a mouthful of salt water. He also shook his head and rubbed it. Then he sat up and said —

" Well, I'm damned ! What has happened ? "

He shook his head again, and suddenly jumped to his feet. The miracle happened, and they all heard it. Tom Ruddle in the old days had the very finest foretopsail-yard ahoy voice that ever rang across the wastes of ocean. It came back to him now.

" Ain't you dogs got that topsail stowed yet ? " he roared in accents that made the second mate on the yard shake in his rubber boots. " Oh, you slabsided gang of loafers, oh, you sojers, dig in and do somethin', or before you know I'll be up there and boot you off the yard."

The entire crowd on the yard was so paralysed by what they heard that they turned and looked at him, and very promptly lost all that they had gained the last bout. To see a minister suddenly become a seaman and use such language was enough to scare them into loosing the jackstay and tumbling overboard.

"Jehoshaphat!" said they, "what's gone wrong with him?"

And the second greaser was just as much surprised as any of them; so much so, indeed, that he could not swear. Ruddle did it for him, and his language was awful, full, abundant, brilliant and biting. He told the second mate what he thought of him, and what he thought of all his relations; and he confided to the storm what his opinion of the crew was and always had been; and of a sudden he made a bound, and jumping on the rail ran up the rigging like a monkey, and before they could gasp he was right in among them at the bunt, exhorting them as if they were impenitent mules.

"Now, now, up with it, you no sailors, you!" he roared, as his long black coat flapped in the wind like Irish pennants. He dug into the bellying canvas with the clutch of a devil's claw, and the crew sighed and were subdued to the strange facts, and did as he told them like the best. There was now a sudden scream from aft. Mrs. Ruddle caught sight of him on the yard, and Chadwick cried out —

"Oh, it was your husband that was swearing so."

"Oh, Tom, Tom," screamed his wife, "come down, come down!"

And she screamed again, and Ruddle heard it and swore vigorously.

"What's a woman doin' on deck in such weather?" he cried, as he clawed at the sail and held it with his stomach, and yelled in unison with the second mate, who now began to see the joke of it.

"Where does he think he is?" he said; and at that moment the last great fold of the topsail rose in the air like a breaking wave, and with one yell of triumph the whole of the crowd threw themselves on it and smothered its life out.

"Sock it to her!" roared Ruddle triumphantly, as he dropped the gathered bunt into the skin of the sail and reached for the bunt gasket.

"There you are," said Ruddle; and then for the first time he looked at the second mate, and an expression of the blankest amazement passed across his face.

"Who the devil are you?" he asked. "I never saw you before."

It was almost impossible to make one's self heard in the howl of the gale, but Ruddle did

it, and the crowd, with a grin on all their weather-beaten and hairy countenances, waited to hear Mr. Smith's answering yell.

"Who the devil do you think you are?" he asked.

"I'm the mate of this ship," said Ruddle, "but, but I don't think I ever saw any of you before?"

"How do you come to be togged up like you are, if you are mate?" asked Smith, as he made the bunt gasket fast. "Don't you think you look a hell of a sailor in that rig?"

"I don't understand it," said Ruddle blankly. "Where did I get these clothes?"

"You'd better ask the 'old man,'" said the second mate. "You're a clergyman, and you ain't a sailor at all."

"You're a liar," said Ruddle. "But I don't understand it. I don't know any of you. Where are we?"

"Off the Cape, to be sure," said Smith.

Ruddle shook his head.

"There is something very horrid about this," he said, with an awe-stricken expression of countenance, "for when we clewed up this topsail we were off the Head of Kinsale."

"Holy Moses," said the crowd, "'ow she must have scooted in 'alf a watch!"

"Well, we're off the Cape now," said Smith impatiently; "and if you don't believe it, you can ask the captain."

And they all came down on deck. Ruddle walked like a man in a dream, and as he walked he rubbed the spot that had been bruised. When his wife saw him coming she screamed again, and called out to him —

"Oh, Tom, Tom! how could you do it?"

And Tom grasped the second mate by the arm.

"Who's that woman calling 'Tom'?"

The second mate stopped as if he had been shot, and whistled.

"D'ye mean to say you don't know?" he asked.

"Confound you, I wouldn't ask if I did," said Ruddle savagely. "It ain't me, surely?"

It was Smith's turn to grab hold of him.

"Don't you know her?" he asked in tones of positive alarm.

"No!" roared the unfortunate Ruddle. "No more than I know you or any of 'em."

Smith nearly fell down.

"Man, she's your wife," said Smith; and once more Susan Ruddle said —

"Oh, Tom, how could you do it and me here?"

Then Chadwick spoke and rebuked Ruddle very strongly for having done it, and Ruddle shook his head and scratched it and shook it again, and then burst out with dreadful language against Chadwick for interfering with a stranger.

"He don't know any of you," said Smith, as Chadwick fell into a cold perspiration to hear his chief use such awful language. "He don't know any of you. And he lets on that he is the mate of this ship, and that we are off the Old Head of Kinsale."

And Susan Ruddle fainted dead away.

"Take the poor silly woman down below," said Ruddle. "She must be mad. I don't know where I am, or how I got here, but I do know jolly well that I ain't married, and that a girl in London that I ain't by no means stuck on thinks I'm going to marry her this very year. But I ain't goin' to, by a dern sight. Not me."

They carried her down below just as the 'old man' came on deck after setting the mate's arm. Smith told him what had happened.

The skipper shook his head.

"This is very remarkable and tryin'," said the skipper. "For Mr. Dixon's arm is broken through this Ruddle barrackin' him and askin' him why he did not take in sail when it was calm, as it would be easier. Oh, this is very wonderful, and I makes very little of it. And now he says he ain't married. He brought her here as his wife, and you are all witnesses to that. Oh, it is very remarkable, and I make nothin' of it in spite of his havin' been a sailor before, as looks likely as he went aloft. Is it true he swore?"

"Most awful and hair-raisin' and blasphemous," replied the second mate, who was a very good judge of swearing.

"Did he now, and him a minister? It's very remarkable, and I makes nothin' of it," said the skipper, and he ran up the poop and right into the arms of Ruddle.

"Who are you? Are you the captain? I want to see the captain before I go ragin' luny," said Ruddle.

"Steady," said the old skipper, grasping him tightly by the arm, "steady, my son. Don't you know me?"

"Never saw you before that I know of," groaned Ruddle. "And there's no one here that I know; and I don't know where I am or what I am, or where I got these disgusting clothes from, or where we are, or anything about anythin' whatsoever."

The skipper gasped.

"You don't remember bein' a minister, and tellin' me that you had been a seaman and had had a bash on the crust with a shearpole from aloft that laid you out stiff, and when you come to you didn't rek'lect havin' bin a sailor at all, and that you then bore up for the Church and became a missionary? Oh, say you rek'lect, for if you don't I makes nothin' of it, and am most confused; and there is your wife in a dead faint down below."

But Ruddle shook his head.

"I don't believe I ever was a missionary, for I always allowed they were a scaly lot. And I ain't married, and the girl that thinks I'll marry her is away off her true course by points. But I say, how long do you reckon I was minister?"

He held on to the 'old man' as if he was holding on to sanity, and implored an answer.

"We'll ask your pal," said Gray, and he bellowed down the companion for Chadwick, who came on deck with his eyes bolting.

"Is that my pal?" asked Ruddle in great disappointment. "Why, I never saw him either."

Poor Chadwick burst into tears.

"Oh, this is dreadful, this is very dreadful," said poor Chadwick. "What shall we do? Our chief stay and strength is gone from us, and doesn't know even me that married him."

Ruddle stared, and then rushed at him and held him in the grip of a bear.

"Steady, mister, are you speakin' truth or are you gettin' at me?"

"It's the truth," said Chadwick.

"Then how long was I in your business? Tell me straight, or I'll sling you overboard right now."

"Eight years," squealed Chadwick; "and there's all of us downstairs can testify to the same."

Ruddle sighed, and looked at the raging sea and at the skipper and at Chadwick, and up aloft. After a long silence he spoke.

"If I'm right the year's eighteen-ninety,

and if you are right it must be ninety-eight or more, accordin' to the time it took me to get my certificate as missionary. What year is it?"

"Nineteen hundred, so 'elp me," said the skipper; "and I'll have up the Nautical Almanac to show you."

But Ruddle took their word for it, and sniffed a little, and then remarked —

"I do think my beard wants trimmin'. And am I mad now?"

"No, no," said the faithful Chadwick, "you aren't mad, and in a little while it will all come back to you, and you will come back to us, and we'll all be happy, even Blithers."

"Who's Blithers?" asked Ruddle sadly. Yet he did not wait for an answer. Though the *Wave* was now hove to under her main-topsail, with the foreyards checked in, and was fairly comfortable, the gale instead of moderating let another reef out, so to speak, and was a regular sizzler.

"I should like to see that main-topsail goose-winged, sir," said Ruddle suddenly, "for if we are off the Cape, as you all seem to think, this is by no means the worst of it, and it will be a real old-fashioned scorcher."

The 'old man' looked at him.

"Do you know the mate's arm is broke?"

"No," said Ruddle.

"Well, it is, and he ain't fit to do a thing, naturally, and that means I haven't a mate."

Ruddle looked pleased for the first time since he came back to his old sea-self.

"You don't say so. Well, that is fortunate," he said with a happy smile. "This is what I call real luck. I'll be the mate, sir, till you can get another."

"Right," said the skipper. "And if you like you can goose-wing the topsail, Mr. Ruddle. I reckon you're right about the weather. We have enough parsons aboard to make old Davy Jones do his best."

And Ruddle, with a happy flush on his face, bellowed from the break of the poop for the watch to lay aft. They heard his voice with amazement and came very lively.

"Haul up the lee clew of the lower main-topsail," said the new mate, and going down on the main-deck he saw the gear manned, and started the sheet, and then lent his gigantic strength to get the clew chock up.

"Jump aloft and goose-wing it," said Ruddle

to the bo'son, and the men jumped and did as they were told with extraordinary agility. They said it was a miracle, and so it was. But Ruddle was quite happy for a moment, and when they were down on deck again he turned to the skipper and laughed, positively laughed.

But the 'old man' did not even smile.

"I'm thinking of the poor little lady down below, Mr. Ruddle," he said with a sigh. "What are you goin' to do about her?"

A look of great determination came over Ruddle's face, and the smile died out of it.

"If I married, and I don't believe I did, when I was dotty through bein' hit on the crust, I ain't goin' to acknowledge it," said he with firmness. "I ain't the same man, that's obvious. And as I don't know the lady, the situation would be uncommon awkward for her and for me, and I think the best thing is for nothin' further to be said."

The skipper was very doubtful as to whether this was the proper way to look at it, and he expressed a very decided opinion on what the lady would say.

"I'm a married man myself," said Gray, "and I own I have a wife that is a jewel, but

what she would say if I said I didn't know her, owing to some accident at sea, fair inspires me with dread. I don't believe Mrs. Ruddle will put up with it, and you'll have a holy time in front of you if she as much as hears that you think of trying it on."

But Ruddle said he didn't care, and that he wasn't going to have a wife foisted on him, so there. And down below Chadwick was breaking the dreadful news to Susan Ruddle that her husband did not know her or anyone else, and that be had become a sailor with a remarkably unorthodox vocabulary, and when this was driven into the poor woman's mind she screamed, and almost fainted again.

"Oh, what shall I do, what shall I do!" she cried. And then Mr. Blithers, who had never liked Ruddle, said that he would put it right.

"I don't believe a word he says if he says he doesn't know us," said Blithers angrily. "I always thought he was not the man he wanted us to think. And as for that story of his, I never believed that either. I shall go on deck and tell him that he is a scoundrel."

He did so. He crawled to the poop and

emerged into the gale in which Ruddle was fairly revelling.

"Ruddle, you are a scoundrel," said Blithers. "I always thought so, and now I know it."

Ruddle inspected him with great curiosity.

"I'm a scoundrel, am I?" asked the new mate. "And what may you be?"

"Don't you dare say you don't know me, Ruddle," said Blithers.

"I know you," said Ruddle. "I can tell by the cut of your jib that you are an infernal humbug of the first water. Get out of this before I hurt you!"

"I won't," said Blithers furiously. "I won't till you say what you are going to do about your wife, who is weeping about you now, and crying to you to come to her."

"If you don't stop tellin' lies about me and ladies I'll throw you down into the cabin," said Ruddle.

"Hypocrite, liar, and man of sin, I defy you!" said Blithers; and the next minute Ruddle had him by the neck and threw him into the cabin.

"Stand from under," said Ruddle, and Blithers howled and fell, and turned over and

over as he went, and at last came to a stop at the feet of Chadwick and the disconsolate wife.

"He threw me down and he knew me," screamed Blithers. "He said, 'I know you, and you are a humbug.' He's just pretending."

"I don't believe it, Mr. Blithers," wailed the unhappy woman. "He was always a good judge of character even when he was at sea before. But I want to see him myself. I must, and I will. He'll know me. Oh, he must know me or I shall die!"

The skipper came down below.

"Oh, captain," said Susan Ruddle, "I want to see him. If he is the mate now, as you say, you must order him to come to me at once."

"I will," said the skipper. "It's odd I never thought of that before, when he as good as said he declined to hear any more argument about wives and women, and let on that the girl that reckoned to marry him was likely to be disapp'inted. You cheer up, ma'am. I'll send him down sharp."

"Leave me here alone," said the discarded wife, who in spite of her grief looked as pretty as a picture. "Leave me alone, please."

Chadwick withdrew, and dragged the raging

Blithers with him. As Chadwick said, if anyone could bring Ruddle back to a sense of the lost period of his youth, it was his wife, and if she failed it was likely to be a very remarkable business and no mistake about it. He told Blithers of other cases of the kind of which he had heard. On the whole, Chadwick was optimistic. But Blithers shook his head, and rather hoped that Ruddle would remain a sailor for the rest of his life.

"I never thought he was fit to be a missionary," said Blithers. "And instead of him, I ought to be looked on as the chief here."

There was a sharp argument going on on deck in the meantime.

"I'll take charge of her, Mr. Ruddle," said the skipper, "and you can go below and see your wife, who is naturally anxious to see you."

"I ain't in the least anxious to go below," said Ruddle. "In fact, if it's all the same to you I'd rather stay here till she's out of the way."

"I don't like to think that you are a coward," observed the skipper severely, "but I'll be compelled to think so if you don't go at once and square things up in some sort of shape."

"Well," said Ruddle, "that's all very well

for you, sir, that ain't caught in the same nip. But I don't want to go. I don't know the lady, and I'm naturally shy, and the cold perspiration pours off me at the thought of it."

"I order you to do your duty," said the 'old man.' "I order you to go below and soothe the lady."

"Oh Lord, oh, I say, I won't," stammered Ruddle. "I'd rather stay on deck all night."

"You won't? That's mutiny, Mr. Ruddle. It is disobeyin' orders, it is refusing duty. I'd be very sorry to use severe measures with you, but if you don't go I'll have you put in irons and carried to her."

"You don't mean that, sir, do you?"

"I mean it," said the skipper. "But I never did see such a man. I never knew anyone so unwillin' to see a pretty woman before."

"Oh, is she pretty?" asked Ruddle anxiously.

"Rather," said the 'old man.' "Oh, a regular beauty, and no fatal error. Dixon and Smith were both off their nuts about her when you came on board."

"What's she like?" asked Ruddle. "Tell me what she is like."

"Well, for one thing, she has got the most

beautiful golden hair," said the skipper; "and from the way it's coiled, tier on tier on her head, I should reckon she can sit on it easy."

Ruddle sighed.

"Well, that seems all right," he said. "I was afraid I might have landed one of the half-bald kind I hate. I like 'em fair too. But go on, sir."

"Her eyes are a very superior kind of blue," said the poetical skipper; "and in my judgment they don't stay the same kind of blue all the time, but changes like the sea when clouds obscure the heavens in a squall. I reckon she's mostly sweet-tempered, but if you riled her it would not surprise me to learn that she could stand up for herself."

"That's the way I like 'em," said Ruddle. "I never could abide the milk-and-water woman. But is she big or little?"

"Neither one nor the other," returned the skipper. "Speaking as a judge of them, I should say she is as she should be, not too little, not too big, but what you might call sizeable. And her complexion, of which I'm a judge, is quite remarkable. Oh, on consideration I should state with some firmness that she's very pretty."

"You comfort me a good deal," said Ruddle; "and if you still insist on my seein' her, I'll do it at once."

"It's my duty to insist, Ruddle," said the 'old man.' "So down you go, and mind you behave. And don't be too stand-offish, for I can't abide to see tears, and never could, and as a result I've had much trouble in my life. And when it's fixed up, come and tell me all about it."

And Ruddle started to see his wife with slow, reluctant steps.

"It's my firm belief that nothin' of this nature ever happened before," said Ruddle, "and my bein' nervous seems tolerable natural. I wonder, oh, I do wonder, if I shall like her!"

He descended the companion as slowly as if he were going to execution.

"Oh, Tom, Tom," cried the lady who was, they said, his wife, and a cold shiver ran down Ruddle's back. He did not dare to lift his eyes, and stood there like a big schoolboy who has got into sad trouble and is much ashamed of himself.

"Oh, Tom, don't you know me?" cried Susan. She made an attempt to rise, which was

very promptly frustrated by the gale. Ruddle lifted his eyes at last.

" If you please, ma'am, I don't think I do," said he. Then he added in desperation — " At least, not well, ma'am."

The situation was too desperate for screaming, and Susan accordingly did not scream. She became dignified.

" I have been your wife for three years, and now you say you don't know me. If you don't know me, who am I, and what am I? Tom, sir, Mr. Ruddle, I pause for a reply."

Poor Ruddle shook his head very sadly.

" It's mighty awkward, I own," he said after some reflection; " and I don't know what to do about it. I'm very sorry I don't know you, but I can't say I do, much as I'd like to oblige a lady that I'm bound to respect, as, according to the other gents in long-tailed coats, I'm married to her. But they say I was a missionary, and now I'm a seaman again, and maybe you don't care for those that follow the sea."

" I don't mind anything," sobbed Susan, who was wondering if she might tell her husband that she loved him and would not care if he were a dustman. But somehow it did not seem

quite proper to speak in that way to a man who didn't know her.

"Oh, please, don't cry," said Ruddle in great distress. "When a lady cries I never know what to do."

"I think I'm almost glad you d-don't," said Susan, and she smiled on him through her tears, and looked very beautiful.

"The 'old man' was right," said Tom Ruddle, "she's as beautiful as a picture, and just the kind I like. I don't think I could have bin' very dotty when I married her, and I wish I remembered somethin' about it. If I say I think she is pretty, I wonder whether she will be mad and think it a liberty. I think I'll try. They mostly like it."

He approached her slowly.

"If I don't know you, what may I call you?" he asked diffidently.

Mrs. Ruddle gave a gasp.

"Don't you know my name? Oh, how very dreadful! I'm Susan, and you used to call me Dilly Duck."

"Did I?" asked Ruddle. "And why did I do that?"

Susan said she didn't know, but supposed that it was because he liked her very much.

"But I like you very much now," said Ruddle, "I really do; and I think you are very pretty, ma'am, if I may say so, and the situation is very awkward. I hope I ain't too forward, which has never been my way with ladies, I assure you."

As it had taken Susan over a year to encourage him to the point of proposing, she felt sure that he was speaking the solid truth, and it touched her deeply.

"I'm very glad you think I'm pretty," she said with the most charming modesty. "If — oh, if you think so, perhaps you are not sorry that you are married."

"But I don't feel married," urged Ruddle desperately, "and I don't know what to do about it. It's by far the awkwardest situation I was ever in by long chalks, and it beats me, it fair beats me."

But surely there was a way out, thought Susan, and she wondered whether as his wife she might not suggest it.

"But you like me?"

"Oh, yes, to be sure," said Ruddle, "and I quite understand how I came to marry you. That is, I can understand how I wanted to, but what fair licks me is what you saw in me.

Perhaps it was my bein' a long-tailed parson. Was it, now?"

"Not in the least," said Susan stoutly, "it was because you were you."

"But now I ain't what I was, and you must find it very embarrassing, ma'am."

"What I find embarrassing is your calling me 'ma'am,'" said Susan, with a snap that made Ruddle see that the skipper was right in other ways than his judgment of the lady's beauty.

"Very well," said Tom Ruddle in a great hurry, "I'll call you Susan if you like."

"Of course I like," said Susan; "and if you like you can call me Dilly Duck too."

But though Ruddle was much encouraged, he could not go so far as that all at once.

"If you won't, you might at anyrate sit down near me," said the fair Circe with the golden hair. And Tom sat down gingerly.

"I don't know what is to be done," said he in a melancholy way. "I suppose you agree with me, ma'am, — Susan, I mean, — that it is very awkward and most unusual? Looking it fair and square, I don't see a way out, unless ——"

"Unless what?" asked Susan, with her eyes on the deck. She herself had an idea of the way out, but she wanted him to find it.

"It's very odd that I should feel as I do, as we have been married," said Ruddle; "but I'm that took aback by the facts as they show up against my present lights, that I seem in a dream, like as if I had sternway on me and was in a regular tangle. Tell me, when I was a missionary was I much afraid of you?"

Susan sighed and took him by the arm.

"I think you were a little afraid sometimes, Tom, especially if I was cross with you."

"Ah, I dessay," said her husband. "And if I was scared of you at times when I knew you, it seems natural, don't it, that I should be worse scared of you now that I don't?"

"But you aren't really frightened of me, darling, are you?" asked Susan, once more turning on the water-works.

"When you cry and call me that," said Ruddle, "I don't know where I am, and I want to ——"

"You want to what?" asked Susan in the sweetest voice.

"I — I don't quite know," stammered Ruddle.

"I know," said Susan triumphantly.

"Oh, no, you can't," said Ruddle in great haste. "I'm certain you can't, for it ain't possible."

But Susan lifted her sea-blue eyes to his and shook her head.

"I do know, Tom. You want to kiss me."

Tom gasped and stared at her. "Well, you are clever," he said, with the greatest air of admiration. "I don't believe that any other woman would have guessed it."

And Susan sat waiting.

"Well?" she said at last.

"Oh, may I?" asked Tom.

"Of course you may," said Susan, once more looking at the deck. And he kissed her, and then took her in his arms while she wept.

"And you are sure you love me again?" she asked.

"It's most wonderful," said Tom, "but now I come to think of it, I feel as if I had always loved you, and no other woman can as much as get a look in. There was a girl in London that thought I was goin' to tie up alongside, but she's away off it, and I'll never marry anyone but you."

Susan wisely forbore at that moment to make any inquiries about this other girl, of whom she had never heard till that moment, and she put her golden head against her husband's shoulder.

"I think I am quite happy, Tom," she said, "though I am very sorry you don't remember how happy we were when we were first married."

Tom shook his head.

"I'm sorry for that, too," he replied, "but it can't be helped, and we'll be happy yet if you really love me enough to marry me again."

"But we are married, Tom," said Susan.

"You may be," said Tom, "but I haven't the feelings of it, and I mean to ask that long-tail to tie us up again, so that there can be no mistake about it. What do you say?"

Susan said he was a darling, and that she loved him more than ever, and was willing to be married to him a thousand times if he wanted it.

"And you don't mind my bein' a sailor instead of a missionary?" asked Tom.

"I much prefer it, so long as you don't go to sea," said Susan; and leaving that to be arranged later, Tom Ruddle called the curious Chadwick from his cabin.

"I've fixed it up," said Tom triumphantly. "I've fixed it to rights, sir. My wife is goin' to marry me again, and we'd be much obliged if you would perform the ceremony."

"It seems very irregular," said Chadwick, "but considering the very peculiar circumstances I've no objection to make. It is really very wonderful. I congratulate you both. I must call the captain and tell him about it."

When the second mate came on deck the 'old man' went below. As soon as he grasped the situation he turned to Susan with a grin.

"You brought him to his bearings pretty quick, ma'am, and I congratulate you. But then a pretty woman like you ain't the sort to go long a-beggin'. I knew you'd fetch him! When I described you to him, me bein' a judge of female beauty, I saw how it would be. Who's goin' to do the new hitching?"

Mr. Chadwick said he was going to do it.

"It's the first time I ever married the same couple twice," he said; and Brother Blithers sat in the background and said it was uncanonical. But no one paid any attention to Blithers. The other missionaries chipped in with their congratulations, and said that they hoped Ruddle would still be one of them.

"Thank you, gentlemen," said Ruddle, "but I have too much admiration for you to think I can be one of you again. I have a cousin that's a shipowner, and when he finds that I'm alive and in my right sea senses, he'll give me a ship, for though I've never been skipper of anythin' yet, I hold a master's certificate. And my wife will go to sea with me."

"Darling, I'll go anywhere with you," whispered Susan. And then they were married, while the gale roared about them, and the good old *Ocean Wave* rode it out under a goose-winged main-topsail as comfortably as a duck in a puddle.

"It's all very wonderful," said Ruddle, as he went on deck at four o'clock to keep his watch. The 'old man' said that it was.

"All the same I knew she'd fetch you," said Gray. "I think the worst of it is over. We'll be makin' sail in the mornin'. As this is your weddin'-day, Mr. Ruddle, I'll keep your watch to-night."

"Thank you, sir," said Ruddle. "Lord, what a wonderful world it is."

Mrs. Ruddle said so too.

V

THE CAPTAIN OF THE *ULLSWATER*

THERE were enemies of Captain Amos Brown who said that he was a liar. He certainly had a vivid imagination, or a memory for a more romantic career than falls to the lot of most at sea or ashore.

"By the time we make Callao, Mr. Wardle," said the skipper to his new mate, as they lay in Prince's Dock, Liverpool, "I expect to be able to tell you something of my life, which has been a very remarkable one."

"You don't say so, sir," said Mr. Wardle, who, as it happened, had heard nothing about the skipper, and was innocently prepared to swallow quite a deal. "You don't say so, sir."

"I do say so," replied the skipper. "It has been a most remarkable career from first to last. Wonders happen to me, Mr. Wardle, so that when I am at sea I just know that something

will occur that is strange. I have a collection of binoculars, with inscriptions on them for saving lives at sea that would surprise you. They have been given me by almost every Government of any importance under the sun."

"That must be very gratifyin', sir," said the mate.

"It gets monotonous," said the skipper with a yawn. "At times I wish foreign Governments had more imagination. They never seem to think two pair of glasses enough for any man. And the silver-mounted sextants I possess are difficult to stow away in my house. If you don't mind the inscription to me on it, I'll give you a sextant presented to me by France, Mr. Wardle, if I can remember to bring it with me from home next time."

Mr. Wardle said he should be delighted to own it, and said, further, that the inscription would naturally give it an added interest. At this the skipper yawned again, and said that he was tired of inscriptions.

"The next lot I pick up I'll request not to give my name," he said. "My wife, Mr. Wardle, gets tired of keeping a servant specially to polish 'to Captain Brown,' with a lot of com-

plimentary jaw to follow that makes her tired. She knows what I am, Mr. Wardle, and doesn't require to be reminded of it by falling over a gold-mounted sextant every time she turns round. A woman, even of a greedy mind, can easily get palled with sextants, and a woman sees no particular use in them when they take up room that she wants to devote to heirlooms in her family. Before we get to Callao I'll tell you all about my wife, and how I came to marry her. It is a romantic story. She belongs to a noble family. She is the most beautiful woman that you ever set eyes on. I'll tell you all about it before we get to Callao. I've always been a very attractive man to the other sex, Mr. Wardle. She's rather jealous, too, though she belongs to a noble family. I understand in noble families it isn't good taste to be jealous, but she is. However, I must write to her now, or I shall have a letter from her at Callao that would surprise you, if by that time I know you well enough to show it to you. And now, what were you saying about those three cases marked P. D., and consigned to Manuel Garcia?"

Mr. Wardle told him what he had been saying about the cases marked P. D. and consigned

to Manuel Garcia, and it was settled what was to be done with them. The skipper said that he wished they were full of his binoculars and diamond-mounted sextants, and also his gold watches with fulsome inscriptions on them, and that they were consigned to Davy Jones.

"And this is a letter for you, sir," said the mate. The skipper opened it.

"From my wife," he said, and then he swore.

"Another pair of binoculars from the Swedish Government," he groaned. "I shall write and say that I would rather have a suit of clothes, and that if there must be an inscription on them will they put it where it can't be seen. The German Government once did that for me, but they put the inscription in good English on the collar, and I found it very inconvenient, for strangers would come and breathe in my neck while they read it."

Mr. Wardle went away to ask the second mate what he thought of the skipper. He sighed, and the second mate laughed. The second mate was an unbelieving dog and a merry one. When it came six o'clock they had a wash, and put on clean clothes, and went up town together, and had a friendly drink at a well-

known public-house which was a great resort for mates and second mates, though a skipper rarely put his nose inside it.

"I wonder what kind of a chap the skipper is, after all," said Humphries, the second mate. "It seems to me, sir, that he is a holy terror of a liar, and no mistake."

"Oh, I shouldn't like to say that," replied Wardle. "I do, however, think he exaggerates and puts it on a bit thick. That isn't bein' a liar. I daresay he has saved life at sea. He wouldn't have offered me a silver-mounted sextant if he hadn't several."

"I shall believe you will get it when I see you with it," said Jack Humphries. "In my opinion Captain Amos Brown is a first-class liar."

Perhaps he spoke a little too loudly for a public place, though that public place was a billiard-room with four second mtaes playing a four-handed game, and making as much row over it as if they were picking up the bunt of the foresail in a gale of wind. He was overheard by the only old man in the room.

"Did I hear you mention someone called Amos Brown?" asked the old chap sitting next to him.

"I did, sir," said the second mate of the *Ullswater*. "Do you know him?"

"I had an Amos Brown as an apprentice with me when I commanded the *Samuel Plimsoll*," replied the old gentleman, "and he was a very remarkable lad. I think I heard you say that this one was a liar?"

"I did," said Humphries; "though perhaps I shouldn't have done so, as I'm second mate with him now, sir."

The old boy shook his head.

"I won't tell him. But it surely must be the same. The Brown I knew was an awful liar, and I've seen many in my time, gentlemen."

He asked them to drink with him, and they did it willingly. To know the one-time skipper of the old *Samuel Plimsoll* was something worth while, seeing that she had once held the record for a day's run. And if his Brown was theirs it was a chance not to be missed. They took their drinks, and asked him to tell them all about Amos Brown.

"He went overboard in a gale of wind and saved another boy who couldn't swim," said the stranger, "and when we got them back on

board, and he could speak, the very first thing he said was that he had seventeen medals from the Royal Humane Society for saving other lives. Does that sound like your man?"

Wardle told him about the binoculars and gold watches and silver-mounted sextants.

"Ah, he's the man," said the old skipper. "Don't you think because he gasses that he hasn't pluck. I'd not be surprised to hear that there is some truth in what he says. I've known one man with four pairs of inscribed binoculars. I daresay Captain Brown has a pair or two. When you see him, tell him that you met Captain Gleeson, who used to command the *Samuel Plimsoll*. And as I'm goin' now, I don't mind owning that I'm the man that has the four pairs of binoculars, gentlemen."

He bade them good-night, and Humphries said when he had gone that he was probably as big a liar as the skipper, and had never seen the *Samuel Plimsoll*.

"And as for Brown bein' a hero," added the second mate, "I simply don't believe it. A liar can't be brave."

This was a large and youthful saying, and Wardle, who was not so young as his subordinate had his doubts of it.

"I rather think the captain is all right," he said. "I'll ask him to-morrow if he was ever in the *Samuel Plimsoll*."

They were at sea before he got a chance to do so.

"The *Samuel Plimsoll?* well, I should say so!" said the skipper. "And you actually met dear old Gleeson! Why, Mr. Wardle, he was the man that set me on makin' this collection of inscribed articles. Bar myself he is the one man in the whole merchant service with more than he can do with. His native town has a department in its museum especially devoted to what he has given them in that way. His wife refused to give them house-room, and I don't blame her. I saved most of the crew in that dear old hooker at one time or another, went overboard after them in gales of wind. They got to rely on me and grew very careless. I often told them that I wouldn't go after any more, but when you see a poor chap drownin' it is difficult to stay in the dry and let him."

"Ah," said Wardle, "he did speak about your savin' one."

The skipper cast a quick look at him, and then laughed.

"One, indeed," he said contemptuously. "Why, I saved the whole of the mate's watch, the mate included; and on three other occasions I was hauled out of my bunk to go after one of the starboard watch. The only thing I have against old Gleeson is that he was jealous when he saw I was likely to knock his collection of medals and binoculars into a cocked-hat. One, indeed! I've saved seventy men, boys, and women, by goin' in after 'em myself; and somethin' like forty-five crews by skilful seamanship in the face of unparalleled difficulties. I wish I could have a talk with Gleeson."

"He said you were one of the bravest lads he ever met, sir," said Wardle.

The skipper's face softened.

"Did he now? Well, that was nice of him, but I think he might have told you about more than one I saved."

"And he said he had only four pairs of binoculars given him by foreign Governments," added Wardle.

"That is his false modesty," said Captain Brown. "He has an idea that if he told the truth he would not be believed. I don't care who doesn't believe me, Mr. Wardle. If sur-

prising things occur to a man why should he not relate them? There's my wife, for instance, one of the nobility, a knight's daughter! I know men that wouldn't mention it for fear of not bein' believed they had married so far above them. She is the most beautiful woman in the three kingdoms, to say nothin' of Europe. I know men that it would seem like braggin' in to say that, but when you get to know me, and know that speakin' the truth isn't out of gear with my natural modesty, you will see why I mention it so freely."

In the course of the next few days Captain Amos Brown mentioned a good many things freely that redounded to the credit of himself and his family, and he did it so nicely, with such an engaging air of innocent and delightful candour, that poor Wardle did not know whether he was shipmates with the most wonderful man on earth or the most magnificent liar.

"I don't know where I am," he confided in his junior.

"I know where *I* am," said the graceless second greaser. "I am with a skipper with as much jaw as a sheep's head, and if he said it was raining I should take off my oilskins. He's

the biggest braggart and liar I ever met, sir."

"I cannot listen to you sayin' such things," said the mate.

"I beg your pardon for doin' so," replied Humphries, "but the 'old man' is a scorcher, and I can't help seein' it."

To a less prejudiced observer it must have been obvious that there were many fine qualities in Captain Amos Brown. He inspected the cooking of the men's food at intervals which annoyed the cook and kept him up to his work. When he went his rounds he saw that things were shipshape even in the deckhouse. The men for'ard said he might be a notorious liar, as they heard from the steward, but they said he looked like a man and a seaman. Mr. Wardle found him as smart a navigator as he had ever sailed with, and before long was learning mathematics from him.

"No officer need be ashamed of takin' a wrinkle from me, Mr. Wardle," said the skipper, after giving him a lesson in star observations that made the mate sit up. "The Astronomer Royal himself owned to me that I could give him pounds and a beating at a great deal of mathematics. I love it, there is something so

fine and free about it. I go sailin' over the sea of the calculus with both sheets aft. He is goin' to publish some observations of mine about the imperfections of the sextant. They were brought to my notice by my series of silver-mounted ones. I'm inventin' a new one compensated for all different temperatures."

And yet it was quite true that, as far as Wardle went with him, a better and clearer-headed teacher could not be found.

"I shall end in believing every word he says," thought the mate.

And if the mate found him his master in navigation, Humphries found that there wasn't a trick of practical seamanship that wasn't at his finger-ends, from cutting out a jib to a double Matthew Walker on a four-stranded rope, which the skipper could almost do with his eyes shut.

"Everything is all the same to me, Mr. Humphries," said the skipper calmly. "I'm a born pilot, and I can handle every rig as easy as if I'd been born in 'em. I can sail a scow or a schooner, and every kind of sailing-boat from a catamaran to an Arab dhow. And at steam I'm just as good."

Humphries did not believe a word of it, and

used to read up old-fashioned seamanship in order to pose him. He never did, and the most out-of-date sea-riddle was to the skipper as easy as slinging a nun-buoy.

"He beats me, I own," said the second mate. "He's the best at all-round sailorizin' that I ever sailed with."

The men for'ard said the same. And the bo'son, who was a very crusty beast from Newcastle, was of opinion that what the 'old man' did not know about ships was not worth knowing.

"I'm goin' to believe 'im hif so be 'e says 'e's bin to the moon," said one cockney. "But for hall we knows the 'old man' may not show hup and shine as 'e does now w'en it's 'ard weather. I was shipmet wiv a skipper once that was wonderful gassy so long's it was topmast stuns'l weather, but when it blew a gale 'e crawled into 'is bunk like a sick stooard, and there 'e stayed till the sun shone."

They soon had a chance of seeing whether the skipper was a fair-weather sailor or not. They had taken an almighty time to get to the south'ard of the Bay of Biscay, for it had been almost as calm as a pond all the way from the

Tuscar. Now the barometer began to fall in a steady, business-like way that looked as if it meant work, while a heavy swell came rolling up from the south. The dawn next morning was what ladies would have called beautiful, for it was full of wonderful colour, and reached in a strange glory right to the zenith. It afforded no joy, artistic or otherwise, to anyone on board the *Ullswater*, as she rolled in the swell with too little wind to steady her. The watch below came out before breakfast, and looked at the scarlet and gold uneasily. There was a tremendously dark cloud on the horizon, and the high dawn above it was alone a threat of wind. The clouds, that were lighted by the hidden sun, were hard and oily; they had no loose edges, the colour was brilliant but opaque. To anyone who could read the book of the sky the signs were as easy as the south cone. They meant 'very heavy weather from the south and west.' The skipper looked a deal more happy than he had done before. His eyes were clear and bright; there was a ring in his voice which encouraged everybody; he walked the poop rubbing his hands as if he was enjoying himself, as he undoubtedly was. He

shortened the *Ullswater* down in good time, but set his three t'gallan's'ls over the reefed top-sails, and hung on to them until squalls began to come out of the south which threatened to save all trouble of furling them. By noon the sun was out of sight under a heavy grey pall, and the sea got up rapidly as the wind veered into the west of south. An hour later it was blowing enough to make it hard to hear anyone speak, and he roared the most dreadful and awe-inspiring lies into the ear of his mate.

"This is goin' to be quite a breeze, Mr. Wardle," he shouted joyously, "but I don't think the weather nowadays is ever what it was when I was young. I've been hove to in the Bay for three weeks at a time. And once we were on our beam ends for a fortnight, and all we ate all that time was one biscuit each. I was so thin at the finish that I had to carry weights in my pocket to keep myself from bein' blown overboard. Oh, this is nothin'! We can hang on to this till the wind is sou'-west, and then maybe we'll heave to."

By the middle of the afternoon watch the *Ullswater* was hanging on to a gale on the port-tack with her main hatch awash, and the crowd

for'ard had come to the conclusion that for carrying sail the 'old man' beat any American Scotchman they had ever heard of. When he at last condescended to heave her to, all hands, after wearing her, had a job with the fore and mizzen-topsails that almost knocked the stuffing out of them, as they phrased it. The skipper, however, told them that they had done very well, and told the steward to serve out grog. As the owners of the *Ullswater* were teetotallers, and about as economical as owners are made, this grog was at the skipper's own expense. When they had got it down, the entire crowd said that they would believe anything the skipper said henceforth. They went for'ard and enjoyed themselves, while the old hooker lay to with a grummet on her wheel, and the great south-wester howled across the Bay. If the main-topsail hadn't been as strong as the grog and the skipper's yarns, it would have been blown out of the bolt-ropes before dark, for the way the wind blew then made the 'old man' own at supper-time that it reminded him of the days of his youth.

"But you never will catch me heavin' to under anythin' so measly as a tarpaulin' in the

rigging," said Captain Amos Brown, with his mouth full of beef and his leg round the leg of the table, as the *Ullswater* climbed the rising seas and dived again like a swooping frigate-bird. "I like to have my ship under some kind of command however it blows. One can never tell, Mr. Humphries, when one may need to make sail to save some of our fellow-creatures. As yet neither of you two gentlemen have got as much as the cheapest pair of binoculars out of our own Board of Trade or a foreign Government. With me you'll have your chance to go home to your girl and chuck somethin' of that sort into her lap, and make her cry with joy. I saved my own wife, who is the most beautiful woman in the world, and weighs eleven stone, and has for years, and I got a sextant and a nobleman's daughter at one fell swoop. Oh, I've been a lucky man."

"How did you save your wife, sir?" asked Humphries, who was almost beginning to believe what the skipper said.

"You may well ask, and I can't tell," replied the skipper proudly. "I hardly remember how it was, for when I get excited I do things which kind friends of mine say are heroic, and I can't

remember 'em. But so far as I can recall it, I swam near a mile in a sea like this, and took command of a dismasted barque with most of the crew disabled through havin' their left legs broke, a most remarkable fact. There wasn't a sound left leg in the whole crowd except my wife's, and the only thing out of order was that the captain's left leg was broke in two places. I took charge of her, and put splints on their legs, and we were picked up by a tug from Queenstown and towed in there, and the doctors all said I was the neatest hand with splints they had ever seen. And I married my wife then and there with a special license, and I've never regretted it from that day to this. By Jove, though, doesn't it blow!"

How the "nobleman's" daughter came to be on board the dismasted barque he did not explain, and he shortly afterwards turned in, leaving orders to be called if it blew much harder.

"And when I say much harder, Mr. Wardle, I mean much harder. Please don't disturb me for a potty squall."

As a result of these orders he was not called till the early dawn, when it was blowing nearly

hard enough to unship the main capstan. Even then Wardle would not have ventured to rouse him if he had not fancied that he saw some dismasted vessel far to leeward in the mirk and smother of the storm.

"I think I saw a vessel just now down to loo'ard," screamed the mate as the skipper made a bolt for him under the weather cloth on the mizzen rigging. "Dismasted I think, sir."

He saw the 'old man's' eye brighten and snap.

"Where did you say?" he roared; and before he could hear they had to wait till a singing squall went over.

"To loo'ard," said the mate again; and the next moment the skipper saw what he looked for.

"Not dismasted, on her beam ends," he shouted. And in a few more minutes, as the dawn poured across the waste of howling seas, Wardle saw that the 'old man' was right.

"Poor devils," he said, "it's all over with them."

The word that there was a vessel in difficulties soon brought out the watch on deck, who

were taking shelter in the deckhouse. As it was close on four o'clock the watch below soon joined them, and presently Humphries came up on the poop.

"Ah!" said the second mate, "they are done for, poor chaps."

This the skipper heard, and he turned round sharply and roared, "What, with me here? Oh, not much!"

He turned to Wardle.

"Here's your chance for a pair of inscribed binoculars," he said. "I believe she's French, and the French government have generous minds in the way of fittings and inscriptions, Mr. Wardle."

"But in this sea, sir?" stammered the mate. "Why, a boat couldn't live in it for a second, even if we launched one safe, sir."

"I've launched boats in seas to which this was a mere calm," said the skipper ardently. "And if I can't get you or Humphries to go I shall go myself."

"You don't mean it, sir," said the mate; and then the skipper swore many powerful oaths that he did mean it.

"In the meantime we're driftin' down to

her," said Captain Brown, "for she is light and high out of the water and we are as deep as we can be."

It soon got all over the ship that the 'old man' meant to attempt a rescue of those in distress, and there was a furious argument for'ard as to whether it could be done, and whether any captain was justified in asking his crew to man a boat in such a sea. The unanimous opinion of all the older men was that it couldn't be done. The equally unanimous opinion of all the younger ones was that if the skipper said it could be done he would go in the first boat himself rather than be beaten.

"Well, it will be a case for volunteers," said one old fo'c'sle man, "and when I volunteer to drown my wife's husband I'll let all you chaps know."

And that was very much the opinion of Wardle, who was a married man too. As for Humphries, he was naturally reckless, and was now ready to do almost anything the skipper asked.

"He may be a liar," said the second mate, "but I think he's all right, and I like him."

Now it was broad daylight, and the vessel was within a mile of them. Sometimes she was quite hidden, and sometimes she was flung up high on the crest of a wave. Heavy green seas broke over her as she lay with her starboard yardarms dipping. She had been running under a heavy press of canvas when she broached to, and went over on her beam ends, for even yet the sheets of the upper main-topsail were out to the lower yardarm, and though the starboard half of the sail had blown out of the bolt ropes, the upper or port yardarm still was sound and as tight as a drum with the wind.

"If she hasn't sunk yet she'll swim a while longer," said the skipper of the *Ullswater*, as the day grew lighter and lighter still. "Show the British ensign, Mr. Humphries, and cheer them up if they're alive. I wish I could tell them that I am here. I'll bet they know me. I'm famous with the French from Dunkirk to Toulon. At Marseilles they call me Mounseer Binoculaire, and stand in rows to see me pass."

The lies that he told now no one had any ears for. Wardle owned afterwards that he was afraid that the 'old man' would ask him

to go in command of a boat, and, like the old fo'c'sle man, he was thinking a good deal of his wife's husband. But all the while Captain Amos Brown was telling whackers that would have done credit to Baron Munchausen, he was really thinking of how he was to save those whose passage to a port not named in any bills of lading looked almost certain. By this time the foreigner was not far to leeward of them.

"No one could blame us if we let 'em go," shrieked the 'old man' in his mate's ear as the wind lulled for one brief moment. "But I never think of what other men would do, Mr. Wardle. I remember once in a cyclone in the Formosa Channel ——"

What dreadful deed of inspired heroism he had performed in a cyclone in the Formosa Channel Wardle never knew, for the wind cut the words from the skipper's lips and sent them in a howling shower of spray far to loo'ard. But his last words became audible.

"I was insensible for the best part of a month after it," screamed Amos Brown. "The usual . . . silver-mounted . . . sickened . . . wife as I said."

Then he caught the mate by the arm.

"We'll stand by 'em, Mr. Wardle. If I get another sextant, as I suspect, I must put up with it. Get the lifeboat ready, Mr. Wardle, and get all the empty small casks and oil-drums that you can and lash them under the thwarts fore and aft. Make her so that she can't sink and I'll go in her myself."

This fetched the blood into Wardle's face.

"That's my job, sir," he said shortly, for he forgot all about his wife's husband at that moment.

"I know it," said the skipper, "but with your permission I'll take it on myself, as I've had so much experience in this sort of thing and you've had none. And I tell you you'll have to handle the *Ullswater* so as to pick us up as we go to loo'ard, and it will be a job for a seaman and no fatal error."

The mate swore softly and went away and did as he was told. The men hung back a little when he told them to get the boat ready for launching, though they followed him when they saw him begin to cast off the gear by which she was made fast. But the old fo'c'sle man had something to say.

"The captain ain't goin' to put a boat over the side in a sea like this, is he, sir?"

Wardle snorted.

"You had better ask him," he replied savagely, and then there was no more talk. He went back to the poop and reported that the boat was ready. He also reported that the men were very unlikely to volunteer.

"They'll volunteer fast enough when they know I'm goin' to ask nothin' of them that I don't ask of myself," said the captain. "I really think the wind is takin' off a little, Mr. Wardle."

Perhaps it was, but if so the sea was a trifle worse. But it seemed to the skipper and the two mates that the French vessel was lower in the water than she had been. She was getting a pounding that nothing built by human hands could stand for long.

"There's not much time to lose," said the skipper.

Captain Amos Brown apparently knew his business, and knew it, as far as boats were concerned, in a way to make half the merchant skippers at sea blush for their ignorance of one of the finest points of seamanship. The skipper had the crew aft under the break of the poop, and came down to them himself. They huddled

in the space between the two poop-ladders and looked very uneasy.

"Do any of you volunteer to try and save those poor fellows to loo'ard of us?" asked the 'old man.' And no one said a word. They looked at the sea and at each other with shifty eyes, but not at him.

"Why, sir, 'tis our opinion that no boat can't live in this sea," said the bo'son.

"I think it can," said the captain, "and I'm goin' to try. Do any of you volunteer to come with your captain? I ask no man to do what I won't do myself."

There was something very fine about the liar of the *Ullswater* as he spoke, and everyone knew that now at least he was telling no lies.

"I'm wiv you, sir," said a young cockney, who was the foulest mouthed young ruffian in the ship, and had been talked to very severely by his mates on that very point. It is not good form for a youngster to use worse language than his elders at sea. Some of the others looked at him angrily, as if they felt that they had to go now. A red-headed Irishman followed the cockney, just as he had followed him into horrid dens down by Tiger Bay.

"I'm with ye, too, sorr," said Mike.

"I'm only askin' for six," said the skipper. Then the old fo'c'sle man, who had been so anxious about his wife's husband, hooked a black quid out of his back teeth and threw it overboard.

"I'll come, sir."

But now all the other young men spoke together. The skipper had his choice, and he took the unmarried ones.

He gave his orders now to the mate without a touch of braggadocio.

"We'll run her off before the wind, Mr. Wardle, and then quarter the sea and lower away on the lee quarter. See that there is a man on the weather quarter with oil, so as to give us all the smooth you can. When we are safe afloat give us your lee to work in all you can, and hang her up in the wind to windward of the wreck all you know. While you are there don't spare oil; let it come down to her and us. It is possible that we may not be able to get a line to the wreck, but we'll go under her stern and try. With all her yards and gear in the sea it won't be possible to get right in her lee, so we may have to call to them to jump.

My reckonin' is that we may pick up some that way before we get too far to loo'ard. When we get down close to her, fire the signal-gun to rouse them up to try and help us. When you see us well to loo'ard of the wreck, put your helm up, and run down and give us your lee again. If we miss her and have to try again, we must beat to windward once more. But that's anticipatin', ain't it? You can put your helm up now, Mr. Wardle. Shake hands."

And they shook hands. Then the skipper and his men took to the boat, which was ready to lower in patent gear, with Humphries in charge of it, and the *Ullswater* went off before the wind. Then at a nod from the captain she came up a little, till she quartered the sea with very little way on her.

"Now, Mr. Humphries," said the skipper. In ten seconds they hit the water fair and the hooks disengaged. The oil that was being poured over on the weather quarter helped them for a moment, and even when they got beyond its immediate influence they kept some of the lee of the ship. They drifted down upon the wreck, and rode the seas by pulling ahead or giving her sternway till they were within

half a cable's length of the doomed vessel. At that moment they fired the signal-gun on board the *Ullswater*, and they saw some of the poor chaps to loo'ard of them show their heads above the rail. Then the full sweep of the storm struck them. But the liar of the *Ullswater*, who had saved more crews in worse circumstances than he could count, actually whistled as he sat in the stern-sheets with a steering oar in his hands.

To handle a boat in a heavy sea, with the wind blowing a real gale, is a thing that mighty few deepwater seamen are good at. But the skipper of the *Ullswater* knew his business even then as if he had been a Deal puntman, a North Sea trawler, or a Grand Bank fisherman all his life. The boat in which he made his desperate and humane venture was double-ended like a whale-boat, and she rode the seas for the most part like a cork. In such a situation the great thing is to avoid a sea breaking inboard, and sometimes they pulled ahead, and sometimes backed astern, so that when a heavy sea did break it did so to windward or to loo'ard of them. And yet a hundred times in the dreadful full minutes that it took them to get down to the

wreck there were moments when those in the boat and those in the *Ullswater* thought that it was all over with them. Once a sea that no one could have avoided broke over them, and it was desperate work to bale her out. And the roar of the wind deafened them; the seas raced and hissed; they pulled or backed water with their teeth clenched. Some of them thought of nothing; others were sorry they had volunteered, and looked at the captain furiously while he whistled through his clenched teeth. One cockney swore at him horribly in a thin piping scream, and called him horrid names. For this is the strange nature of man. But he pulled as well as the others, and the skipper smiled at him as his blasphemies cut the wind. For the skipper saw a head over the rail of the wreck, and he knew that there was work to be done and that he was doing it, and that the brave fool that cursed him was a man and was doing his best. The words he spoke were such as come out of a desperate mind, and out of a man that can do things. They towed an oil-bag to windward, but there was no oil to calm the movements of the soul at such a time.

"Oh, damn you, pull!" said Amos Brown.

He ceased to whistle, and cursed with a sudden and tremendous frenzy that was appalling. The cursing cockney looked up at him with open mouth.

By the 'old man's' side in the stern-sheets there was a coil of rope attached to a little grapnel. If the men still alive on board the French barque were capable of motion they might be able to make a rope fast, but after hours of such a storm, while they were lashed under the weather bulwarks, it was possible that they were almost numb and helpless. Now the boat came sweeping down by the stern of the barque; they saw her smashed rudder beating to and fro, and heard the battering-ram of the southwest seas strike on her weather side.

"Back water!" roared the skipper, for astern of them a big sea roared and began to lift a dreadful lip. They held the boat, and the 'old man' kept it straight on the roaring crest, and at that moment they were lifted high, and saw beyond the hull of the barque the white waste of driven seas. Then they went down, down, down; and when they were flung up again the skipper screamed to those on board, and as he screamed he threw the grapnel at the gear of

the spanker, and as they surged past her stern the hooks caught in the bight of her loosened vangs. For all her gear was in a coil and tangle, and the topping lifts of the gaff had parted. The men backed water hard, and the boat hung half in the lee of the wreck, but dangerously near the wreck of the mizzen-topmast, which had gone at the cap and swayed in the swash of the seas. Now they saw the seamen whom they had come to save, and no man on the boat's crew could hereafter agree as to what happened or the order of events. The skipper called to the poor wretches, and one cut himself adrift and slid down the sloping deck and struck the lower rail with horrible force. They heard him squeal, and then a sea washed him over to them. He was insensible, and that was lucky, for his leg was broken. Then they made out that one of the survivors was the captain, and they saw that he was speaking, though they heard nothing. There were, it seemed, no more than ten of the crew left, for they counted ten with the one man that they had. But it seemed that they moved slow, and the sea was worse than ever. It boiled over the weather-rail and then came over green, and all the men

in the boats yelled filthy oaths at the poor numb wretches, and called them horrible names. The Irishman prayed aloud to heaven and to all the saints and to the Virgin, and then cursed so awfully that the others fell into silence.

"Jump, jump!" screamed the skipper, and another man slid down the deck and came overboard for them. He went under, and got his head cut open on a swaying block, and knew nothing of it till he was dragged on board. Then he wiped the blood from his eyes and fell to weeping, whereon the swearing cockney, who had been oddly silent since his eyes had met the skipper's, cuffed him hard on the side of the head, and said, "'Old your bloody row, you bleedin' 'owler!" And then three of his mates laughed as they watched their boat and fended it off the wreck of the mizzen-mast with deadly and preoccupied energy. The cockney took out a foul handkerchief and dabbed it on the bleeding man's head, and then threw the rag at him with an oath, saying that a little blood was nothing, and that he was a blasted Dago, and, further, he'd feel sorry for him when he was on board the *Ullswater*. Then another man jumped and was swept under and past

them, and just as he was going the skipper reached over and, grabbing him by the hair, got him on board in a state of unconsciousness. Then three of the poor fellows jumped at once, two being saved and the third never showing above the water again.

"As well now as wiv the rest of hus," said the cockney, who had give the Dago his 'wipe,' and he snivelled a little. "Hif I gets hout of this I'm for stayin' in Rovver'ive all the rest of my life."

Then they got another, and there were only the French skipper and one more man left. It was probably his mate, but he had a broken arm and moved slow. The French captain got a rope round him and slid him down to loo'ard. But when he was half-way down the old chap (he was at anyrate white-haired) lost his own hold, and came down into the swash of the lee scuppers with a run. He fell overboard, and the Irishman got him by the collar. He was lugged on board with difficulty, and lay down on the bottom boards absolutely done for. The other man didn't show up, and the men said that he must be dead. They began talking all at once, and the skipper, who was now up at the

bows of the boat, turned suddenly and cuffed the Irishman hard, whereupon Mike drew his sheath-knife, saying in a squeal, "You swine, I'll kill you!" But the bo'son struck him with the loom of his oar under the jaw, and nearly broke it. He snatched his knife from him and threw it overboard.

Now they saw the *Ullswater* right to windward of the sinking barque, and some oil that they poured into the sea came down to them, so that the hiss of the sea was so much less that it seemed as if silence fell on them. They heard the Irishman say with difficulty as he held his jaw —

"All right, my puggy, I'll have your blood."

He had lost his oar, and the other men were wild with him. What they might have said no one knows, but the skipper turned to them, saying that he would go on board after the last man. They all said at once that he shouldn't. They gave him orders not to do it, and their eyes were wild and fierce, for they were strained and tired, and fear got hold of them, making them feel chilly in the fierce wind. They clung to the captain in their minds. If he did not come back they would never be saved, for now

the boat was heavily laden. They opened their mouths and said 'Oh, please, sir,' and then he jumped overboard and went hand over hand along the grapnel line and the tangle of the vangs. They groaned, and the Irishman wagged his head savagely, though no one knew what he meant, least of all himself. They saw the 'old man' clamber on board as a big sea broke over her, and they lost sight of him in the smother of it. They sat in the heaving boat as if they were turned into stone, and then the Irishman saw something in the sea and grabbed for it. He hauled hard, and they cried out that the skipper mustn't try it again. But as the drowning man came to the surface they saw that it was not the skipper after all, but the French mate, and they said 'Oh, hell!' being of half a mind to let him go. But the bo'son screamed out something, and they hung on to a dead man's legs, for to the dead man's hands the skipper was clinging. They got him on board not quite insensible, and the Irishman fell to weeping over him.

"Oh, it's the brave bhoy you are," he said; and then the skipper came to and vomited some water.

"Hold on, what are you doin'?" he asked, as he saw the two cockneys trying to heave the dead man back in the sea. They said that he was dead. The bo'son said that the deader had only half a head, and couldn't be alive in that condition. So they let the body go, and the skipper woke right up and was a man again. They hauled up to the grapnel or near it, for they were strained enough to do foolish things. Then they saw it was silly and cut the line. They drifted to loo'ard fast, and got out into the full force of the gale, which howled horribly. They saw the *Ullswater* lying to under her sturdy old maintopsail, and as soon as they saw her they were seen by the second mate, who was up aloft with his coat half torn off him. To get her off before the wind quick they showed the head of the foretopmast-staysail, which was promptly blown out of the bolt ropes with a report they heard in the boat like the dull sound of a far-off gun. She squared away and came to the nor'-east, and presently was to windward of them, and in her lee they felt very warm and almost safe, though they went up to the sky like a lark and then down as if into a grave. And then they saw their shipmates' faces, and the

skipper laughed oddly. The strain had told on him, as it had on all of them, not least perhaps on some of those who had not faced the greater risks. And it seemed to the skipper that there was something very absurd in Wardle's whiskers as the wind caught them and wrapped them in a kind of hairy smear across one weather-beaten cheek. All those in the boat were now quite calm; the excitement was on board the *Ullswater*, and when the gale let them catch a word of what the mate said, as he stood on the rail with his arm about a backstay, they caught the quality of strain.

"Ould Wardle is as fidgety as a fool," said Mike the Irishman, as he still held on to his jaw. "He'll be givin' someone the oncivil word for knockin' the oar out o' me hand."

He sat with one hand to his face, with the other, as he had turned round, he helped the bo'son.

"What about your pullin' your knife on the captain?" asked the bo'son.

Then Micky shook his head.

"Did I now? And he struck me, and he's a brave lad," he said simply. But the hook of the davit tackle dangled overhead as they were

flung skyward on a sea. There were davit ropes fitted, and one slapped the Irishman across the face.

"It's in the wars I am," he said; and then there was a wind flurry that bore the *Ullswater* almost over on them. The way was nearly off her, and in another minute she would be drifting and coming down on them.

"Now!" screamed the skipper, and they hooked on and were hauled up and up.

"Holy Mother," said Mike, "and I'm not drowned this trip!"

The boat was hauled on board, and when the skipper's foot touched the deck he reeled. Humphries caught him.

"Oh, steady, sir," said Humphries, as Mike came up to them.

The captain stared at him, for he did not remember striking him.

"It's the brrave man you are," said Mike simply; "and you're the firrst man that I've tuk a blow from since I was the length of my arm. Oh, bhoys, it's the brrave man the skipper is."

The second mate pushed him away, and he went like a child and lent a hand to help the

poor 'divils of Dagoes,' as he called those who had been saved. The mate came and shook hands with the captain. The tears ran down Wardle's hairy face, and he could not speak.

"I shall have another pair of binoculars over this," said Captain Amos Brown with quivering lips.

"You are a hero," bawled the mate as the wind roared again in a blinding squall with rain in it. The skipper flushed.

"Oh, it's nothin', this," he said. "Now in the Bay of Bengal——"

The wind took that story to loo'ard, and no one heard it. But they heard him wind up with 'gold-mounted binoculars.'

. . . . . .

A year later he got a pair from the great French Republic. They were the first he ever got.

THE END.

From

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By Charles G. D. Roberts, author of "The Haunters of the Silences," "Red Fox," "The Heart of the Ancient Wood," etc. With cover design, sixteen full-page drawings, and many minor decorations by Charles Livingston Bull. Cloth decorative, with decorated wrapper . . $1.50

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